FREE GAME DETAILS PAGE 39 | **SAVE $20 OFF HALF-LIFE 2!** EXCLUSIVE TO PCGA: PAGE 46

PC GAMES ADDICT

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REVIEWS SPECIAL!
18 GAMES RATED!

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ISSUE 28 DECEMBER 2004
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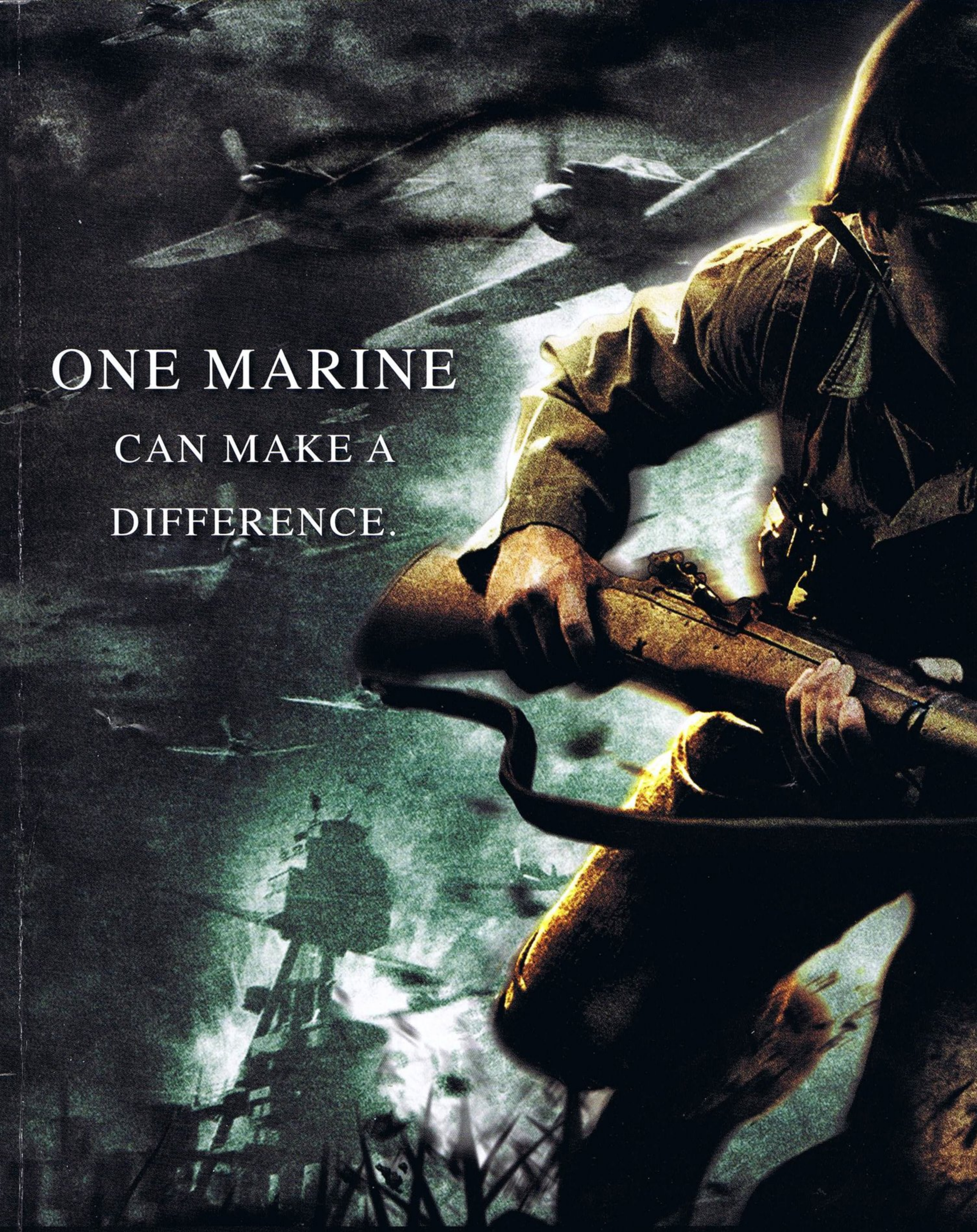
PREVIEWED: MEN OF VALOR › EVERQUEST 2 › MORE!



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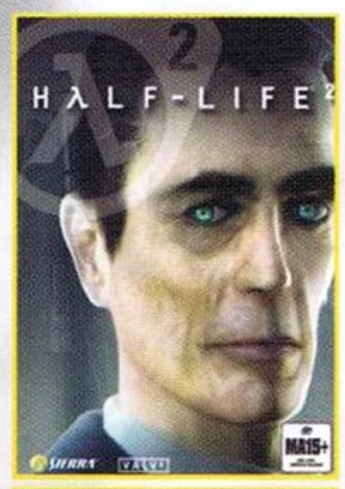

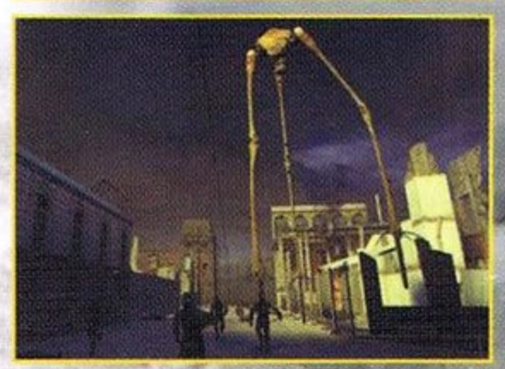

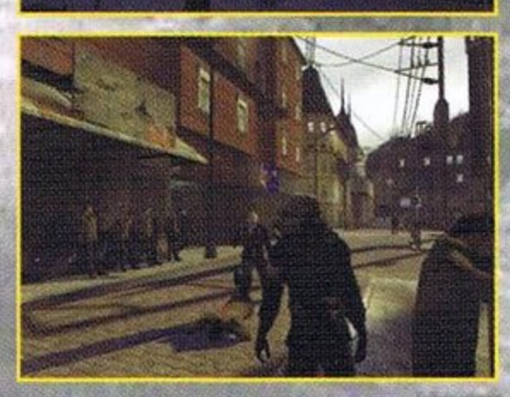

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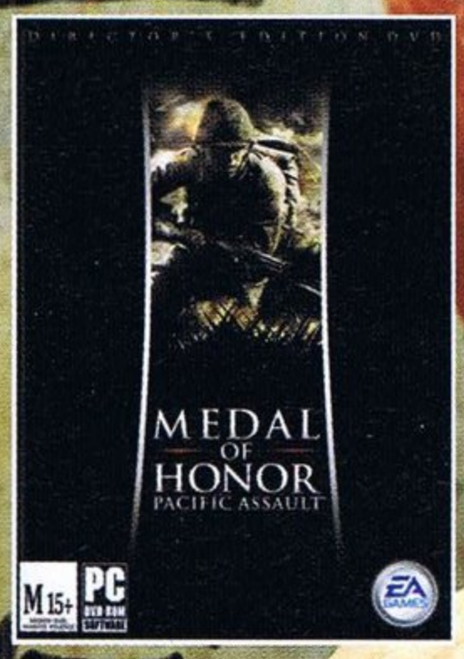

"You don't play, you Volunteer"

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PC GAMES

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derwenthoward.com.au

DERWENT HOWARD

This month, we've been

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RECOILING IN...
...*F.E.A.R.* and so will you once you get a taste of this genuinely creepy FPS due late next year.

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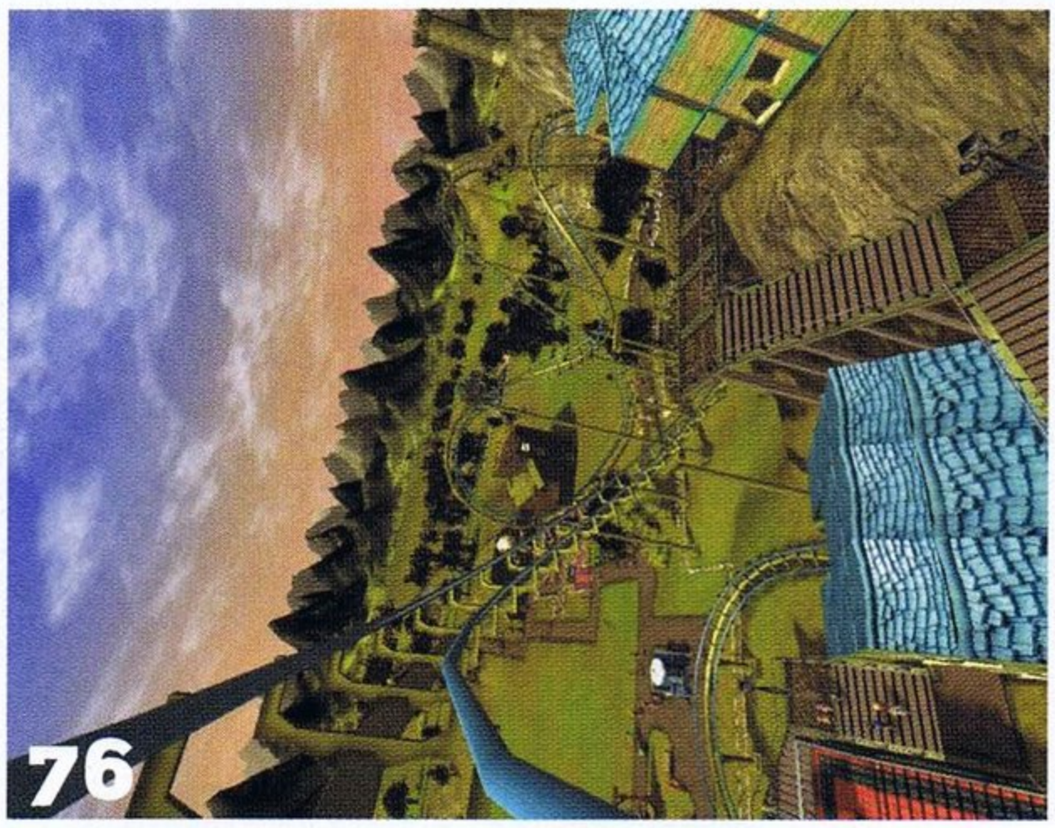
ISLAND HOPPING...
...in the totally tropical *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*. Fix bayonettes and charge!



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SCREAMING...
...because *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* just made it into the third dimension. Build and then ride your own stomach-churning rides! Even better, test them on a friend who gets motion sick!

70

MODELLING METAL...
...in the Aussie-made Tribes *CTribes: Vengeance*. Classic home-grown gaming goodness!

52

RAKING IT IN...
...all over the Spanish Main. Sid Meier's swashbuckling classic *Pirates* is back with a vengeance!

Can't get off!

I'll be honest and admit that after covering *Half-Life 2* and *Dawn of War* last issue, I was ready for things to 'wind down' a bit. It was simply too hard an act to follow.

Then I had the pleasure of getting a world exclusive review of *Pirates*, but my joy turned to concern as I realised I had no idea how I'm going to keep plodding away at my current *Rome: Total War* campaign while also managing to keep putting in the hours to win the hand of the hottest babe in the Caribbean. I still haven't had a chance to install my copy of *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* yet either!

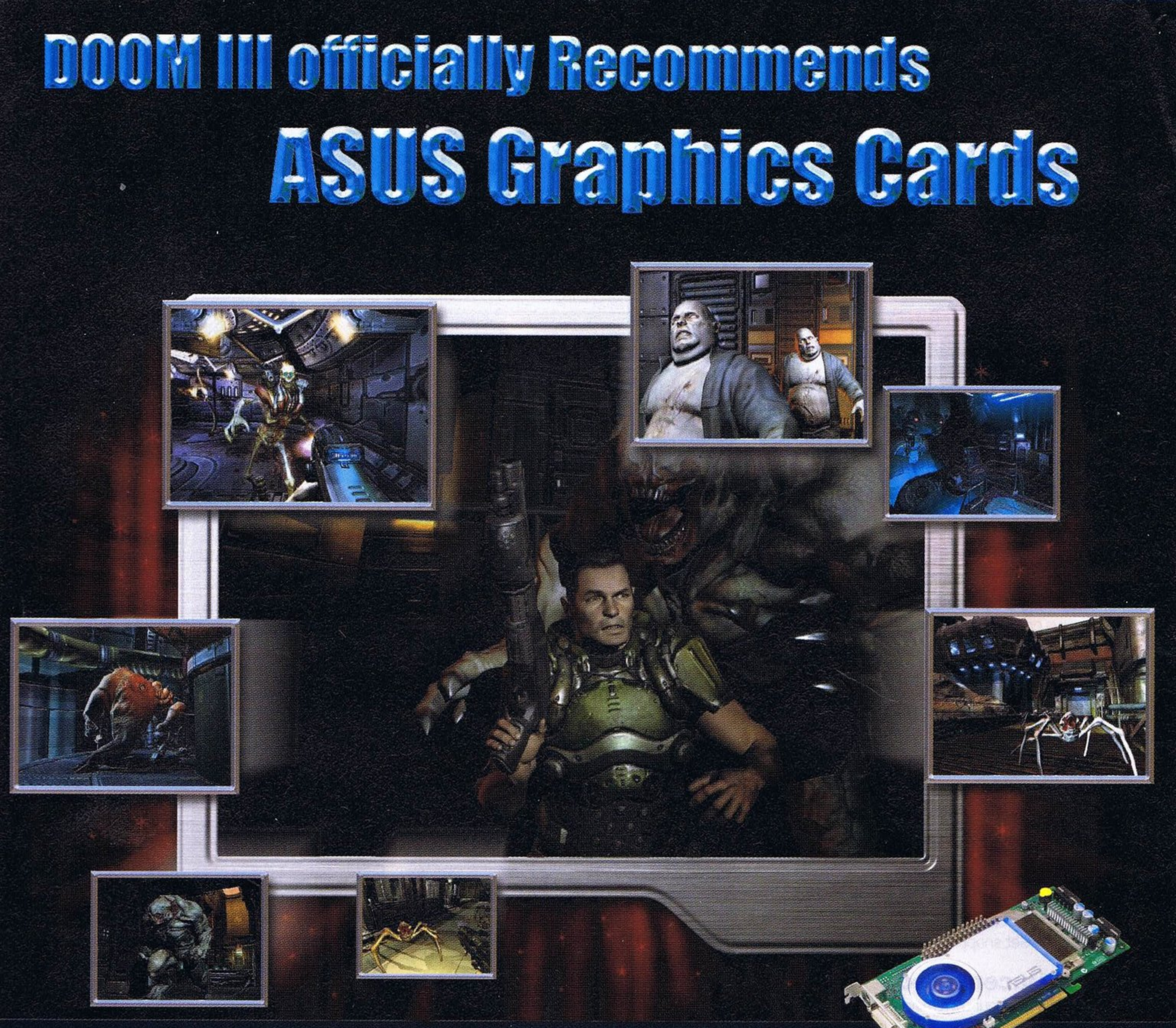
I realised it wasn't just one more classic landing, as the bling-bling reviews just kept arriving in my inbox. This has been an unusually good Christmas season, and with my eyes still bloodshot from late-night *World of Warcraft* sessions, and Eliot equally dopey from extended *Everquest II* outings, the gold rush obviously is not over just yet. So I'm chained to my PC, gaming away, probably unlikely to see much sun this summer as a result.

Who cares? The industry is always finding ways to make games better, and right now I'll be basking in light of what is looking like a new golden age of gaming. This wonderful sensory overload may be sending me off the rails right now, but who wants off of a ride like this?

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

DOOM III officially Recommends

ASUS Graphics Cards



ASUS V9999ULTRA Deluxe

DOOM III demands the most critical 3D power that is best handled by ASUS graphics cards.
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Issue 28 December 2004

PC GAMES ADDICT

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The first steps of a Night Elf hunter

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Pushing platform perfection classy combat to new levels. Full Review!

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Pure gold from the 1C hangar!

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COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
A *Half-Life 2* flavoured upgrade for the war on terror.

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Ragdoll physics + sordid fantasies = hilarity. One clever comedian wins free stuff each month. Get snappin'

52 Uncensored
A place for your own reviews, with a smart arsed comment afterwards on your speelink mystakes and stuf.

54 Subscribe
Every subscriber is a winner, literally! PCGA is giving a FREE GAME to each reader wise enough to have their PC gaming bible home delivered. Not some lousy piece of budgetware, but Pacific Fighters, the latest, greatest combat flight-sim from Russian sim-masters Maddox!

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94 D-I-Y
Creat an editor in, er, well, the Sims 2 editor, the Body Shop. Don't have it? We included it on the cover disc.

96 Long Play
The dark side of the Doom 3 - the multiplayer and poor Al Bickham admits he's still playing X-Com. The shame.

98 Culture
The UN make a game about Food Aid, pixelated Playboy bunnies, QuakeCon modding madness and the dark shifty world of MMORPG crime.

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114 Next Month
Take notes and laugh at our plans going awry in a month's time. It's fun! fun!

ON THE DISC PC GAMES ADDICT is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

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YOUR MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games *you* want

1 HALF-LIFE 2 RELEASE OUR CANDIDATE

Okay, we were about to kick *HL2* out of Most Wanted, but what with you lot still voting for it, and the teensy fact that it's not actually out yet…

So how will you be buying *Half-Life 2*? Off the shelves or through Steam? It's a decision you need to think about, because there will be several different versions. Off the shelves there's a Standard offering, and a Collector's Edition. Standard gives you the main game and CS: Source, while the Collector's also comes with the original *Half-Life* rendered with the Source engine, a T-shirt and a sampler of the Prima book. The Collector's Edition comes on DVD.

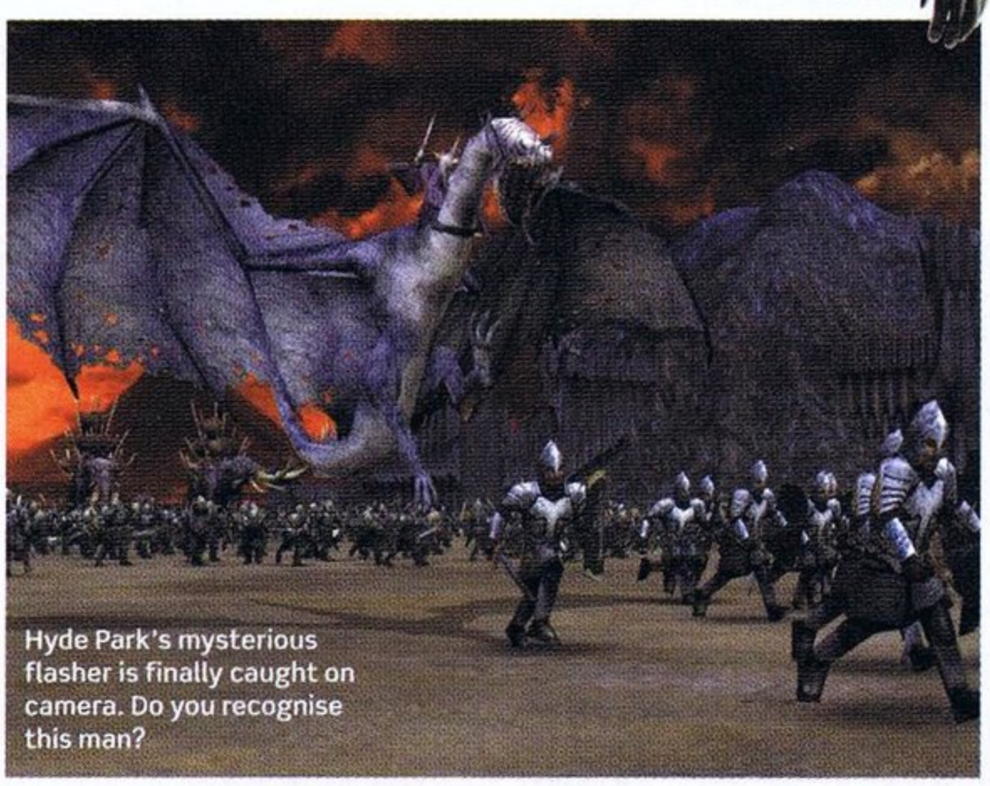
Steam's offering are even more elaborate. There are Bronze, Silver and Gold packages. Bronze gets you the game and CS: Source, Silver the game, *CS: Source*, *Half-Life: Source*, *Day of Defeat: Source* and the whole of Valve's back catalogue on Steam. The Gold package gives you all that, the complete strategy guide, three posters, a hat, a postcard, stickers, the soundtrack on CD and a 1-in-5,000 chance to visit Valve and touch the hand of Gabe.

The best news of the lot that we can offer is a concrete release date. Yes, it's official, Vivendi sent us an email this month that confirmed *Half-Life 2* will be available (at retail) as of November 16. Pressuming you bought this magazine the day it went on sale, you have six days to brace yourself for pure, post-apocalyptic gaming bliss.

Official ETA November 16

We say The press release screamed, "We finally know for sure!" Huzzah!

Having failed to defeat the aliens, Gordon was doomed to spend the rest of his life fixing their toilets.



Hyde Park's mysterious flasher is finally caught on camera. Do you recognise this man?

2 BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH ISN'T IT ICONIC

The streamlining of *The Battle for Middle-Earth* continues apace. It looks like it'll be as smooth as a baby balrog's behind by the time it hits the shelves, with most of the commands deferred through a right-click menu. The developers have reduced the typical RTS icon-driven system down to just a few symbols running across the bottom of the screen.

Why bother? Simple: the huge armies fill the entire screen, just as they did in the movies. Ground-shaking battles with hordes of charging troops are the norm. The player needs as much visible screen as possible to plan the Nazgul raids. Ironically, as hardcore as the troop sizes are, *BfME's* streamlining makes it look one of the most player-friendly RTS efforts on the horizon.

Official ETA November

We say On time

ess

Dr Snichnelin's hotdog recipe is finally revealed to the world.

3 WORLD OF WARCRAFT SERVED UP

Label it masochism, but last month Blizzard called on the community to help them stretch their *World of Warcraft* servers to breaking point.

They devised the World of Warcraft Beta Stress Test, the purpose being to take the game and servers to the absolute limit. So the people signed up and Blizzard set about doing things to their servers that would give Saint Isidore of Seville hives. (The proposed patron saint of the internet – you mean you didn't know? **http://tinyurl.com/6e4nl**.) They caused login problems, halved the number of servers to force the players into the remaining six, and got the players to gather in one area. Basically, this was a big, virtual party where you got to do everything bad in the game.

It's good to see a developer take the time to explore the darker side of MMO management, and shore themselves up against future disasters.

Official ETA The AU launch will coincide with the US/Korean one. Er?
We say December or January

A big, virtual party where you got to do everything bad

Fantasy mystery #6: Why is it that extremely pious champions of justice in RPGs like this *WoW* lady always happen to be wearing something that'd make a complete slut feel quite self-conscious?

key (~) to access that console.

Typing "spawn weapons/JPN_44.hag" releases the Japanese 44 rifle. You can append various things to the "spawn weapons" command to access more fire-irons. "/landmine_allied.hag" gives the US marine landmine, "/US45.hag" gives the US marine .45 revolver, "/JPN_Model96LMG.hag" gives the Japanese Model 96 light machine gun, "/type100_smg.hag" gives the Japanese Type 100 sub-machinegun, "/US_Colt45.hag" gives the US marine colt .45 pistol, and "spawn items/binoculars.hag" spawns binoculars.

Official ETA November
We say Sounds good to us ▶

4 MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT DEMO ASSAULT

Sometimes two free levels just aren't enough. You lot want more, and we want you to have more. So here's the deal: the recently released *Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault* demo can be hacked to access both hidden weapons and binoculars.

First you have to right click the game's desktop shortcut, and append the shortcut with this: "+set ui_console 1" (without the quotation marks). This enables the in-game console. Now in-game, press the tilde

"I know you're eager, but now's not the time to listen to your German language tapes, Micky!"

WIN A GAME

MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

The Most Wanted chart is voted for by the PCGA readership. Every issue we compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the very latest news, screenshots and insider information we can uncover. On top of helping us help you, the voter with the best reason for their number #1 choice wins a game!

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

1 _____
2 _____
3 _____
4 _____
5 _____

Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

In 25 words, what's best about your #1 game?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Send your entries to:
MOST WANTED
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Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
Or email **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au**
Or vote by web **pwww.pcga.com.au**

YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

5 HALO 2 JUST WHAT *IS* A CARNEYHOLE?

As the Xbox version of *Halo 2* nears completion, game journos have been allowed to witness its glorious multiplayer aspects. *Zanzibar* has so far stood up to public scrutiny with confidence, with gamers flying to its booth. So far none have reported finding a Carneyhole, though.

What is a Carneyhole? Well, it seems designer Chris Carney likes to mess around on the maps. He sticks little hidden cavities, packed with weapons and health, into the internal builds of the game. The reason has nothing do with development and everything to do with a sneaky attempt at ownage. According to the weekly Bungie update, Chris uses these to hide – "popping up occasionally to snipe". Even those with the most intimate knowledge of a game sometimes need help.

Official ETA Nothing. Nada. Zilch
We say December 2005 at this rate

Top Gear and Robot Wars finally merge.

6 GTA: SAN ANDREAS EASY RIDER

Everyone wants to talk about guns, violence and gangs in the next *GTA* game. Which is why we're focusing on the exciting world of downhill mountain biking.

The *GTA* games always impress with their incidental details, and the vast scope of *San Andreas*, which is

three times the size of *Vice City*, means there's plenty to fill. Dominating the skyline is Mount Chiliad. You can take your character anywhere in San Andreas, so popping up to the top of the hill is no problem, but getting down is another matter – you have to race. You mountain bike all the way to the bottom, fighting other competitors and bunny-hopping your way through the thickets and ferns. There's even a functioning gear-change system on the bike.

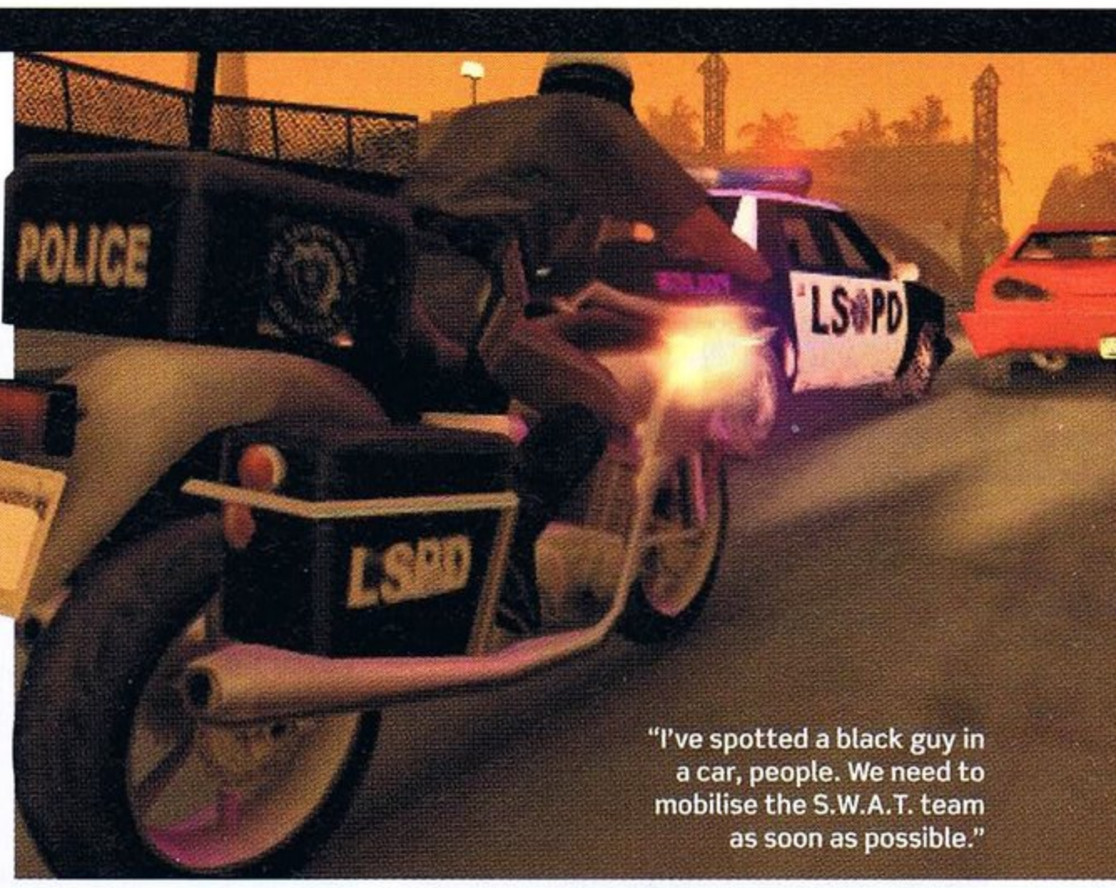
Official ETA May 2005
We say Yup, that far off

7 VAMPIRE: BLOODLINES IN THE NECK

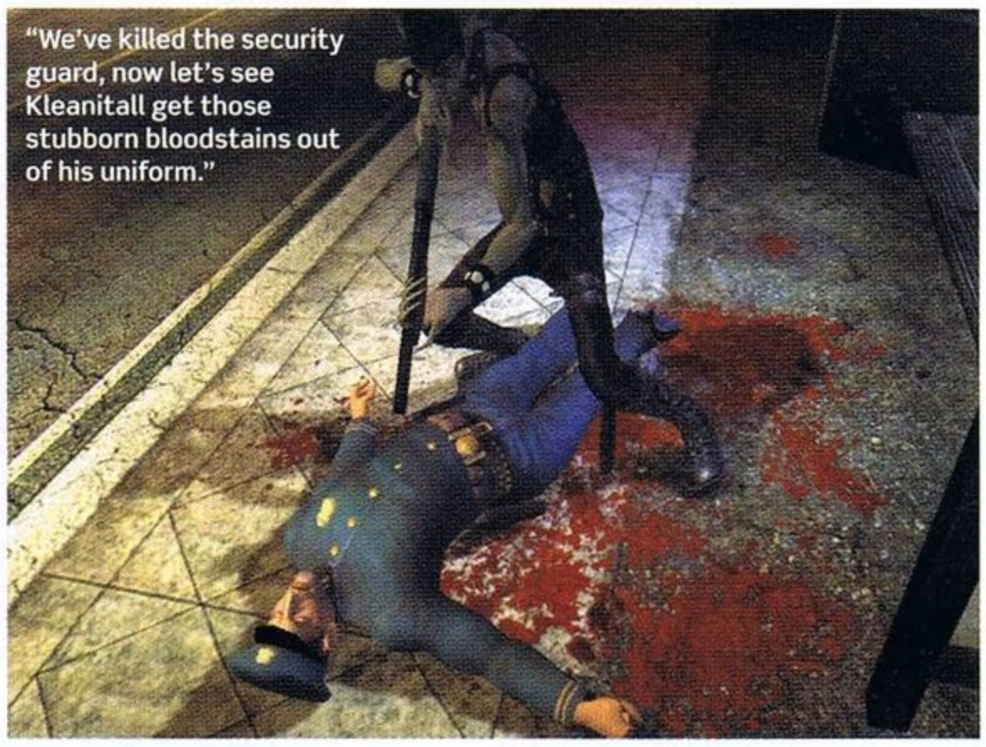
Just as one Source-based game prepares to drop out of the top ten, another one claims a place.

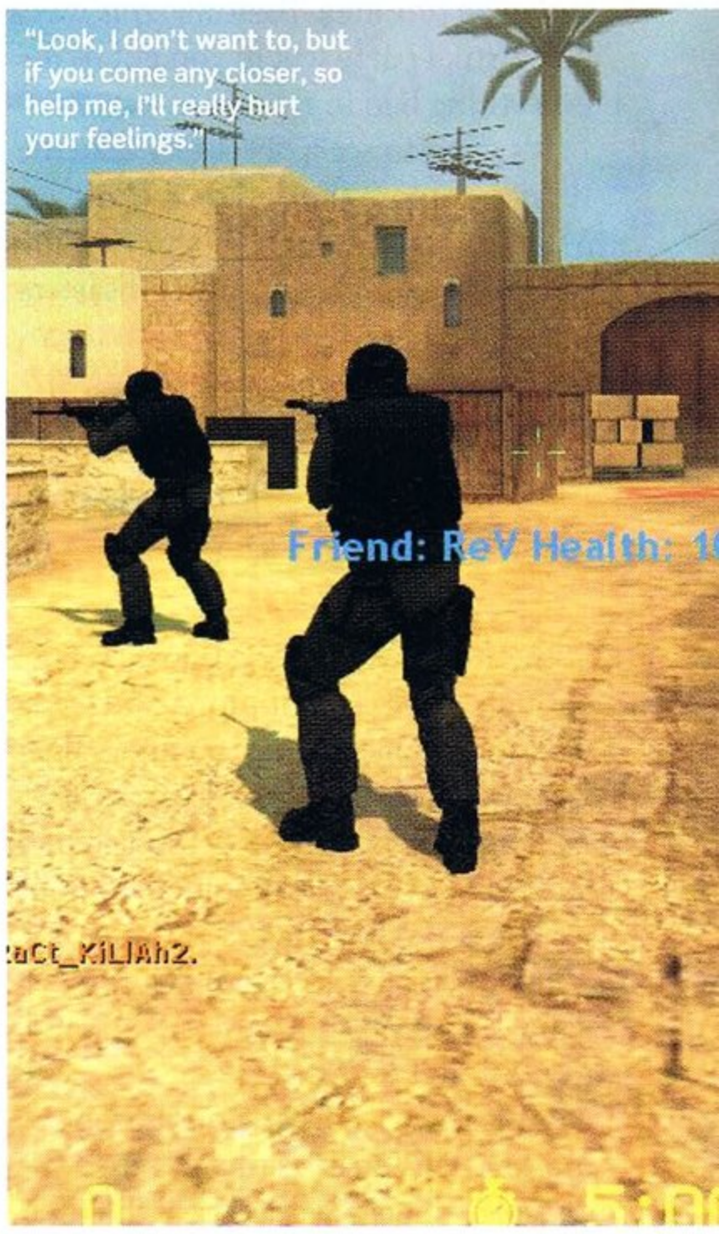
This first-person RPG is set in a dark future America where vampires roam the streets. It's also striking because it's powered by the *Half-Life 2* engine. Troika have spent the last eighteen months modifying it with a new lighting system plus cloth routines (so your stylish goth cape crumples properly). Valve approached Troika with Source – a pro-active stance that probably has more to do with showing off the capabilities of their engine than any sort of altruism. But then Troika did create the ace

"A little dry ice, some disco lights... yeah. Now I'm ready to hit the town, baby".



"I've spotted a black guy in a car, people. We need to mobilise the S.W.A.T. team as soon as possible."


"We've killed the security guard, now let's see Kleanitall get those stubborn bloodstains out of his uniform."



"Look, I don't want to, but if you come any closer, so help me, I'll really hurt your feelings."

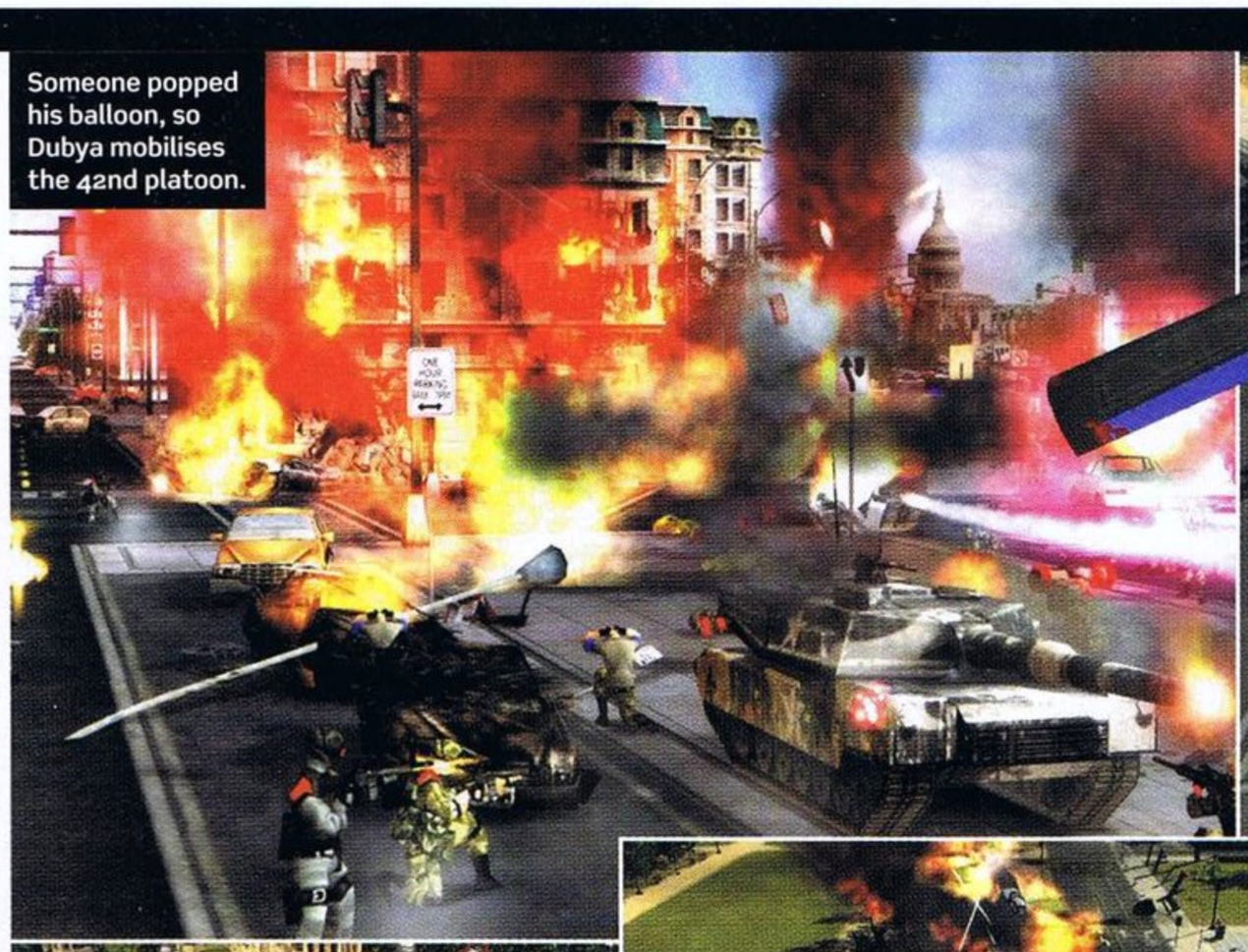
YOUR MOST WANTED CHART

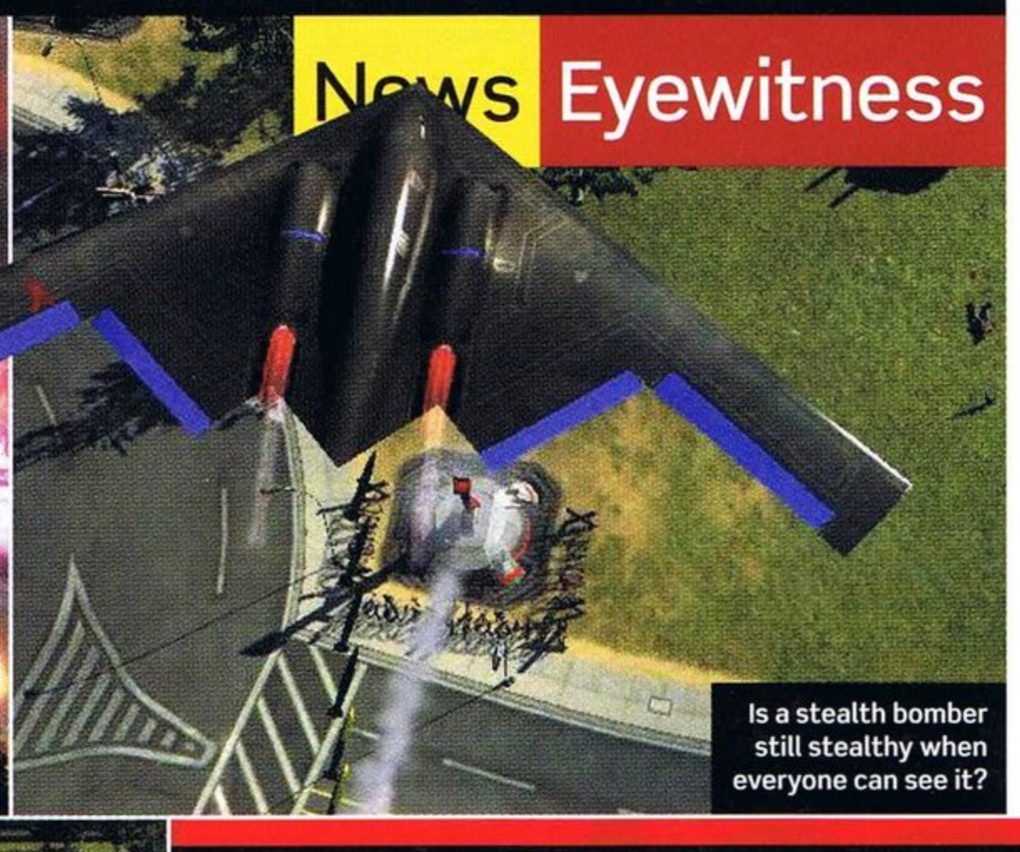
Once more for luck...

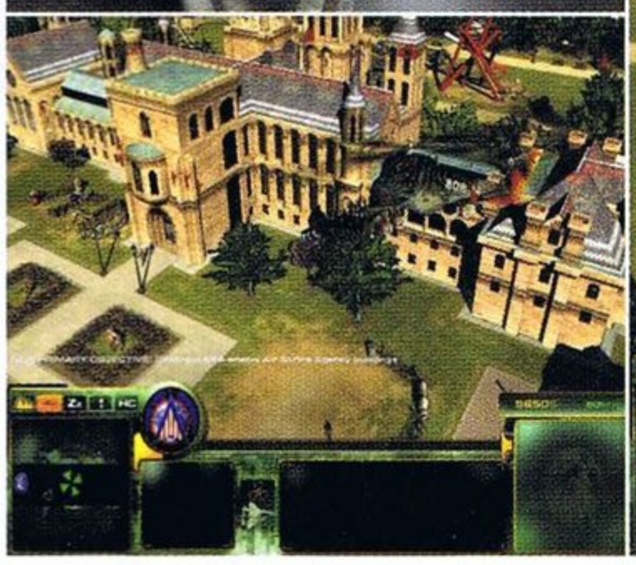
Half-Life 2 is the kind of game we can understand a fixation with, particularly since that at least at the time of publication, it was something we'd been lucky enough to play, and you of course have had to suffer that little bit longer. Considering the game isn't really out yet, we've binned our 'If it's reviewed, it leaves these pages' policy, because it obviously is still the most wanted game around.

The **PCGA** team are dying for November to come and go, because *Half-Life 2* has been the milestone we've been approaching for years...

POSITION	GAME WANTED	VOTE SHARE	ETA
1 (1)	*Half-Life 2*	24%	November
2 **RE**	*LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth*	18%	November
3 (4)	*World of Warcraft*	18%	Dec-Jan
4 (7)	*MoH: Pacific Assault*	10%	November
5 (3)	*Halo 2*	8%	2005
6 **RE**	*GTA: San Andreas*	7%	May 2005
7 **NEW**	*Vampire: Bloodlines*	6%	November
8 **NEW**	*Counter-Strike: Source*	4%	November
9 (5)	*Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*	2%	March 2005
10 **NEW**	*Dungeons & Dragons Online*	1%	2005
NEAR MISS	*S.T.A.L.K.E.R*	1%	Jan-Mar 2005


Someone popped his balloon, so Dubya mobilises the 42nd platoon.


Is a stealth bomber still stealthy when everyone can see it?



"Phew. It's just a squirrel... Look out, he's got a gun!"

ONE TO WATCH

ACT OF WAR

■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Eugen Systems.

Act of War is a modern-war RTS with a charming little twist. It's a *C&C Generals* type game that lets the player zoom in from a satellite view to take control from a street-level perspective. So you can watch the civilians burn up like little matchsticks. With some futuristic extrapolations of modern technology and real-world cityscapes, it's up to you to be the Dubya, be the Dubya, be the Dubya.

Fallout games, so maybe Valve are just fanboys at heart?

Official ETA November
We say After *HL2*. February 2005

8 CS: SOURCE BUT FROM WHAT SOURCE?

OK – so we're really just a bunch of geeks at heart. Everyone has been playing the *Counter-Strike: Source* beta in the office, and we love it so much that it's slowly warping our speech patterns. Craig is the biggest culprit. Everything is either "r0x0r" or "sux0r" now.

Question is, how will you get your Source? It's a bit of a pressing issue, and no greater evidence of that could have appeared than the manner in which Valve and Vivendi have had a total falling out over the issue. For those of you who find this sort of legal guff boring, consider the precedent that things like this can have. If Valve prove that online distribution can work with HL2, publishers and game stores will consider their days numbered.

Official ETA November 16
We say Definately

9 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY CO-OPERATION

Stealth games have almost been exclusively a single-player experience, with the 2-on-2 antics of *Pandora Tomorrow* being the only exception.

The next exception will be *Chaos Theory*, with something far more evolved than Sam's last effort. Two players will be able to use a host of new gizmos, and a gaming buddy to find new ways to confuse, occupy and side-step the terrorists of tomorrow in the next *Splinter Cell* game. Versus mode will still be there for all you antagonists out there.

Official ETA March 2005
We say According to plan…

The life of an anti-gravity screenshot model is never easy.

"Oh great, years of being a mal-adjusted killer and now I have to learn to play with others. Meh."

10 D&D ONLINE DUNGEON 'CRAWL?'

How would you describe the pacing of the average MMORPG? Yes, that's right, they're about as fast-paced as a sloth on downers, but that's not to be the case for *D&D Online*.

The pen & paper game may have soaked up whole weekends to cover just a few rooms of a dungeon, and electronic iterations have generally been turn-based tedium for those who need some 'Wham bam, cheers for that mam!'.

Whether or not *D&D Online* will outshine *Everquest II* is questionable, but you can compare their comeliness by checking the movies on this month's DVD.

Official ETA 2005
We say Hardly a bold call…

Microsoft are making a concerted effort to close the gap between PC and Xbox.

PC in a box

An Xbox 2, that is

Microsoft have revealed intriguing plans for future integration between PCs and Xbox 2.

Remember our report on the game development system 'XNA', earlier this year? Well, combined with Longhorn, the next big release of Windows, and Microsoft's next version of DirectX, XNA brings PCs and consoles closer than ever. The theory goes that making the same game for Xbox 2 and PC will be a doddle, putting an end to bad ports and long delays.

In more specific revelations, it's been announced that Xbox 2 controllers will also work with PCs, suggesting they'll use normal USB-type ports. More startlingly, word on the street says Xbox 2's version of Microsoft's online gaming service, Live!, will also work on PCs. The implication – that console gamers will be able to play with and against PC gamers in the same games – isn't new, the Dreamcast just about makes it a reality, but with today's games on both platforms, it'll mean a whole new world of online gaming.

Obviously, this is all part of the Mighty M's ongoing strategy – but the big-thinking doesn't end there. The overall aim is for Longhorn to make PC gaming as easy as playing a console. That means streamlining everything, from installation to drivers, and even working with hardware manufacturers to come up with a rating system for new PCs to do away with confusing system specs. New games will be labelled as requiring system level X, Y or Z, and everyone will be clearer about what they've got.

No doubt much of this will have the hardcore grumbling into their beards but it should open our world to more gamers than ever, and that's no bad thing.

These are ambitious plans for Microsoft. With four key releases all scheduled for early 2006 – Windows Longhorn, the next major DirectX version, Xbox 2 and XNA – there's plenty that might go wrong. But if it all works, PC gaming could change for the better.

README

Publisher Microsoft
Developer In-house
ETA 2006

SAY *WHAT*?
The month in tongues

Peter Molyneux
"There is something I have to say. And I have to say it because I love making games... If I have mentioned any feature in the past which, for whatever reason, didn't make it as I described into *Fable*, I apologise."

Peter Molyneux admits that many of the features that were supposed to appear in Fable *were just that: fables.*

Tim's *Rome: Total War* general
"I have consulted the Oracle, and the omens are not good. We may outnumber these Gauls three to one, but they are hairy and burly."

Tim's Rome: Total War *general predicts his own death at the pointy end of a brigand spear brigade.*

Doom 3 Expansion

Double the fun, but twice the terror...

It's a best seller and a bowel-emptier, but *Doom 3* isn't exactly a crowd pleaser. Not in the literal sense, at any rate, as only four persons can use the multiplayer mode simultaneously. Demanding gamers might see this as something of a deficiency in the sinister shooter, so Carmack and co. are shipping an add-on for those who want to broaden their multi-marine mayhem.

Entitled *Doom 3: Resurrection*, the expansion pack will double the multi-player potential to eight players at once. Plus there'll be a new story mode to scutter through, starring the real hero of the series: the double-barrelled shotgun. Like *Quake IV*, the project is being farmed out to a third party developer, leaving id more time to do what they do best: build games that force you to upgrade. God bless 'em!

More next issue...

More is merrier, thus this expansion will improve multiplayer

gobbets

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Devil's Advocate

Vietnam happened. Wargames can't ignore history.

TIM EDWARDS tries to be nice, but it doesn't always work out. His attempts to spread joy and affection in *CS: Source* have been roundly beaten down, by the business end of a Desert Eagle. He's recovering, but welcomes flowers and cards.

Discuss this article at http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

Some arresting statistics, before we begin. A total of 9.1 million people served during the Vietnam war. Eleven per cent of fatalities, and 17 per cent of the wounds were caused by booby traps. One in ten American soldiers who served in Vietnam were classed as casualties, wounded or killed. Lots of people went to war. Lots of them didn't come home. It was, and still is, a Big Deal.

Now, examine the videogame representations of said war. Compare the likes of *Battlefield: Vietnam*, *Shellshock: Nam '67* and *Vietcong* with the reality. Imagine placing *The Fall of Hue* – a pleasant knockabout *BF: Vietnam* map – next to a long, drawn-out battle in the final days of the Tet offensive, which resulted in the death of an undocumented number of civilians, thought to number in the thousands. Try explaining to a veteran of the war how *Shellshock: Nam '67* "depicts the reality of Vietnam" and isn't just a mediocre, brown, first-person shooter set in the jungle.

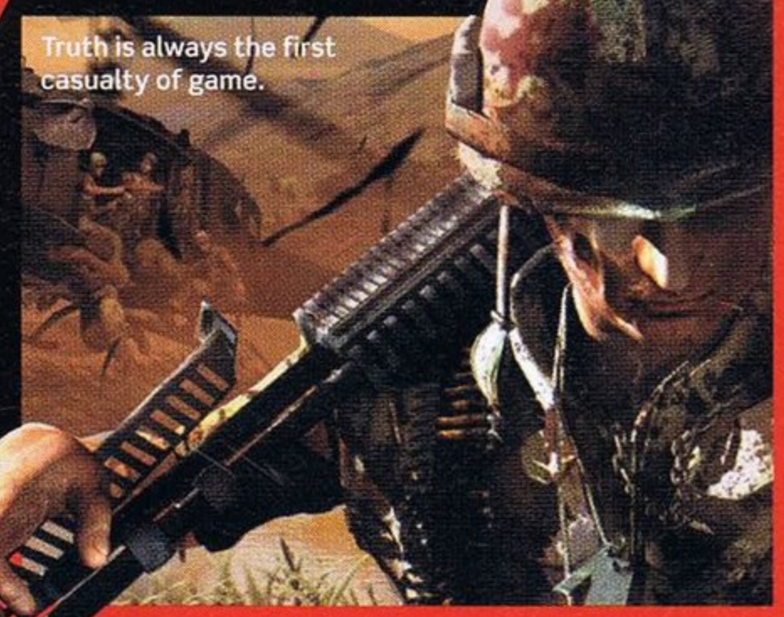
I tried to, a couple of months ago. At a press event for one of the myriad Vietnam games, I was given the chance to talk at length with a former Special Forces soldier who had run interdiction patrols on the Ho Chi Minh trail. He was 'advising' the developer, providing piecemeal support in their quest for authenticity. I asked him a simple question: "If you were to make a game about Vietnam, what would it be like?" His answer was remarkable: "I'd make it beautiful."

His argument was that the areas of the country he'd operated in contained some of the most striking scenery in the world. As a professional soldier, he held an enormous grudge against the way the war was portrayed in the movies: his experiences bore no resemblance to the overwrought drama of The Deer Hunter or Apocalypse Now. He freely admitted to enjoying his time in the military.

Wargames are tourism. You play them to experience the sights and sounds of conflict. You're there for the spectacle – a naval bombardment, maybe an amphibious landing. You want to see Private Denny get his head caved in by shrapnel. You want to plug holes in enemy troops as they advance on your position. You want to crawl through muddy trenches on your belly, face down, terrified for your life. You want to drive a bayonet into flesh, take delight in it piercing the skin. You're a sick puppy. You need to admit this. Go on. It'll be good for you. It's OK.

There's a reason why so many people look down on videogames. It's because they trivialise every subject they come into contact with. Vietnam games are a sobering example of this. Vietnam is a war that still haunts the public psyche, a wound that won't heal for another 30 years. The reason games of it appear so trivial is because they continually shy away from the reality, presenting instead a sanitised view. Where are the playable documentaries? Where's the polemic? Where's the gore?

These aren't the ramblings of a blood-crazed madman. If you're going to present a subject, developers, then you can't pull punches. You can't avoid the violence and you certainly can't afford to cop out on death and destruction. To do so is to trivialise the issues, and trivialise the sacrifices of so many. To avoid the reality of a war is to miss the point altogether.



Truth is always the first casualty of game.

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Product Awards & Honors

Unde

Illustrations by David Lyttleton

As one of The Spy's favourite musical groups put it, "Guns don't kill people, rappers do." But rumour has it that the BBFC (the UK equivalent of the OFLC) don't quite see it that way. This is may well affect Australian gamers, because the OFLC are looking at revamping our classification system - making it even harsher since they've gone and banned **Manhunt** retrospectively. The Spy overheard a senior games industry figure discussing the British Board of Film Classification's potential plans regarding violent videogames. Incredibly, word on the street suggests that *any* game featuring guns would get slapped with an '18' certificate by default.

But The Spy suggests you take this rumour with a bucket of salt. In an effort to discover the truth, The Spy went straight to the horse's mouth: a well-placed BBFC insider assured us that the rumours were "unfounded". Even if they are based on fact, the likely side-effect here would be that the OFLC would finally create an 'R' rating, and that's where most games would fall under here. Good for adults, bad for younger gamers.

And anyway, do phasers count? It's a question that may be asked if the proposed **Star Trek** MMORPG comes to fruition in 2007. There are no hard details showing up on The Spy's tricorder just yet, but developers Perpetual are on the case. Stay tuned.

Meanwhile, in Sweden, the makers of **Battlefield: 1942** have bought up the makers of the most popular mod for their game. Trauma Studios crafted **Desert Combat**, the most-played mod for any game (**Counter-Strike** notwithstanding) over the past year: EA-linked Digital Illusions were clearly impressed enough by their efforts to bring them on board and double their staff level. The Trauma folk will now work on future game designs as well as contributing to **Battlefield 2**.

Alex Seropian is not a name that rings many bells. But perhaps it should be: he founded Bungie, creators of **Halo**. Having sold that company and game to Microsoft, he's taken his sweet time to announce a new project. His Wideload Games are using the **Halo** engine to create a PC and Xbox action game which, if they're to be believed, will be funny. As in 'ha-ha', rather than 'strange'. The amount of talent at this studio bodes well, as does the news of a publishing deal with Aspyr.

But as usual, The Spy saves the best until last. Tapping into an otherwise Sahara dry conference call between top Take Two executives and major shareholders, The Spy's antennae twitched when the conversation turned to the PC version of **GTA: San Andreas**. The money men say it will arrive in May 2005 then returned to spewing numbers at each other. The things The Spy has to listen to for you. And in another sure sign of big games breaking cover, Vivendi have confimed **Half-Life 2** as a November 16 release, and that the Australian and New Zealand **World of Warcraft** release will coincide with the US and Korean launch. We're on the map now it seems…

Spy out.

Pssst! It's...

The Spy

This page will self destruct in ten seconds, lest the OFLC catch on and start banning everything in sight...

Who is The Spy? The Spy is EVERYONE, and NO-ONE

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"With so many WWII shooters concentrating on teamwork, Mortyr II's solo gameplay is a welcome return to tense one-man-army action."
- PC Zone

mortyr II

Ego-Shooter achtung!

"Graphically, Mortyr II looks set to be quite spiffing actually, thanks to Mirage's home made Argon engine that does a fine job of replicating the look and feel of WWII battlefields."
- PC Zone

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www.mortyr2.net

PC CD ROM

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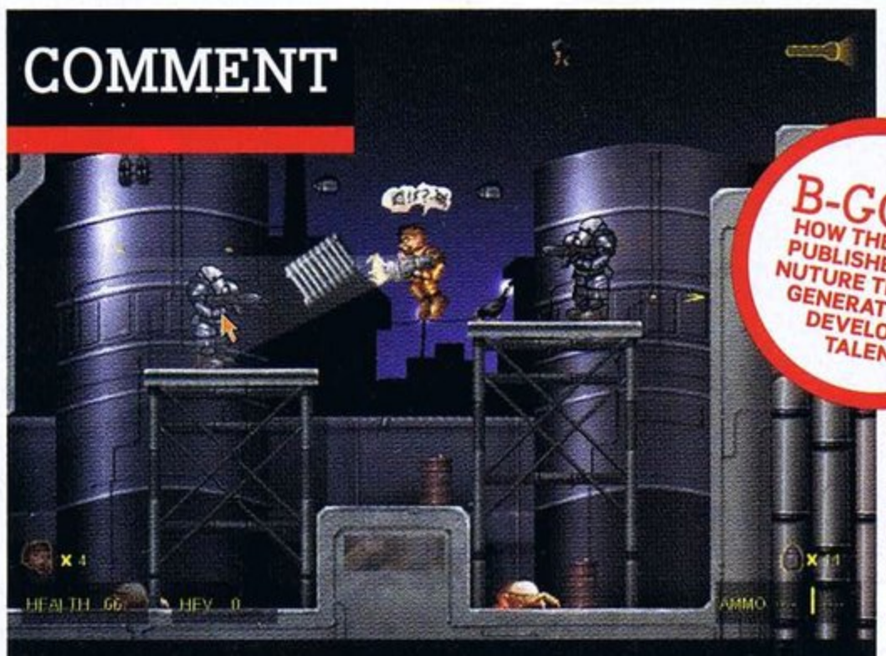
COMMENT



The games industry needs B-Sides

So I had a brainstorm in the shower. I was thinking about the claims, made every year, that the games industry is 'dead in terms of innovation'. That there aren't any new game mechanics; that every successful game today is just a game that we've already made with better graphics or one strange new feature. The folks that make those claims would look at *Doom 3* and say "It's *Doom* with a journal and a flashlight. Whoop-ee-doo".

Then it hit me: The games industry needs B-Sides. For anyone who never got their music on a grooved vinyl disc, a B-Side was the flip side of an album, the side that you didn't buy it for. On the A-Side were all the hits that were on the radio, the sounds that people paid for. The B-Side was usually the weird experimental stuff that the band gave you as an 'extra' – you might like it, you might not.

I think there is an interesting opportunity here: stick some B-Side experimental games on the DVD with the big title. Little Flash games, or student games, or internet games that haven't taken off yet. Don't advertise them on the box, sell the 'big game' just like always. But some folks might try the little thing that comes with it – and game designers can be totally off the wall because it *doesn't matter* if it's successful: it isn't being independently sold, and it's probably either cheaply made or the kind of thing folks do in their basements for the love of the craft. It won't have the glitz and glamour of the big game.

I have an idea what the critics are going to say: "No one makes games cheaply anymore." (But the freeware tools are really coming along!). "No one has the resources for experimental development." (Ahem, just look at how many people enter the Independent Games Festival on shoestring budgets and student work...). And (my least favourite): "The big game companies make the best games because they have all the good game designers."

It's all rubbish. Come on games industry, this is an idea that's worked before in a global entertainment industry.

B-GOOD
HOW THE MAJOR PUBLISHERS CAN NUTURE THE NEXT GENERATION OF DEVELOPER TALENT

It's a war game, which means blood, gore and fearsome big tanks.

Mortyr 2

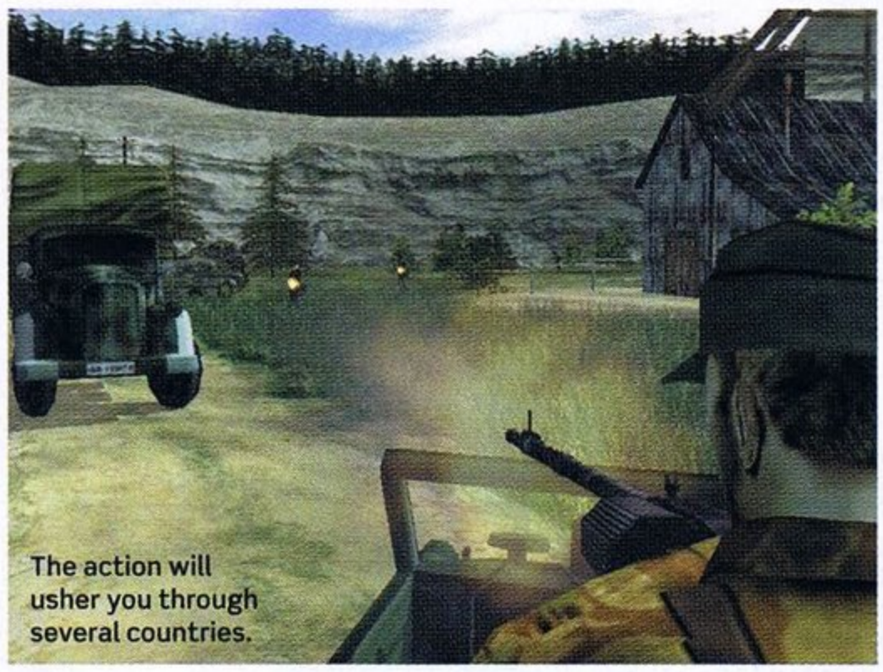
Heaven Svent

Allied intelligence has learnt that the Nazis have commissioned a super-weapon to be built in frosty Norway. They've sent their best agent, Sven Mortyr, to investigate but when he arrives, disaster. Not only are the rumours true, but the dastardly Germans have strong-armed the local populace into building the death-dealing rocketry.

Tragedy strikes when Sven discovers his own father has been forced to work on the weapon. As a good son, it's up to him to save his father and the world. Cue music, dramatic gun-fire, flame-throwers, tanks and rocket-launchers. Yup, it's a run-and-gun game.

In *Mortyr 2*, you'll face legions of Axis troops, take on entire brigades of armour, drive tanks and helicopters, and steal, manipulate and fire every kind of imaginable military hardware.

You bash baddies across Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece and the Nazi heartland. When you come a-cropper in the single-player, you can join the war online, fighting through *Unreal Tournament* assault-like missions as a team.



The action will usher you through several countries.

README

Publisher Redback
Developer Mirage
ETA Nov-Dec '04

GfK THE PC TOP 10 CHART

JUSTICE IS TRIUMPHANT...

Yeah, *Sims 2* has started to develop piles already, sitting atop the charts, where it's unlikely to move from in the near future. Maybe *Half-Life 2* will push it off, but we actually doubt that. It should, but it probably won't.

There is some encouraging news about the right games selling through though, as *Rome: Total War* conquers all, except of course the Maxis money-making machine.

People are lining up in rows to buy *Rome: Total War*, and so they should!

POSITION	GAME	PUBLISHER
1 (1)	*The Sims 2*	EA
2 (NE)	*Rome: Total War*	Activision
3 (3)	*The Sims: Deluxe*	EA
4 (3)	*Wrahammer 40k: Dawn of War*	THQ
5 (NE)	*Star Wars: Battlefront*	EA
6 (NE)	*Call of Duty: United Offensive*	Activision
7 (5)	*Doom 3*	Activision
8 (NE)	*FIFA 2005*	EA
9 (NE)	*Rollercoaster Tyc 2: Thrill Pack*	EA
10 (4)	*The Sims: Unleashed*	EA

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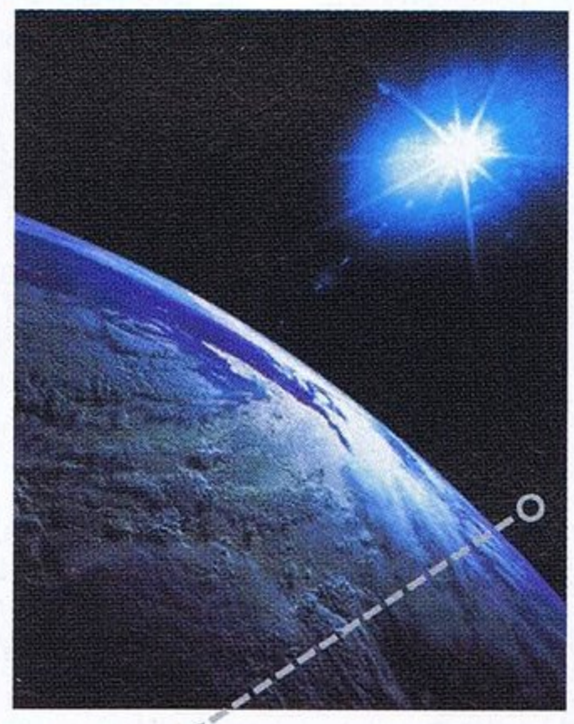

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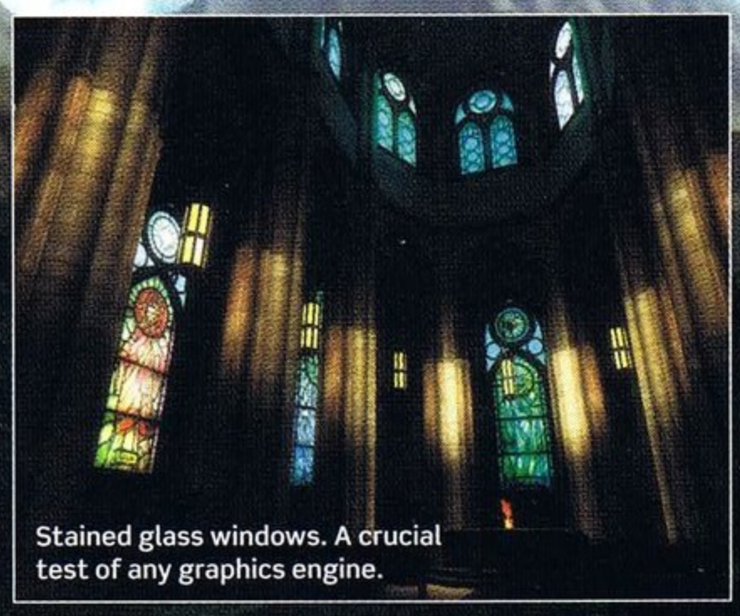
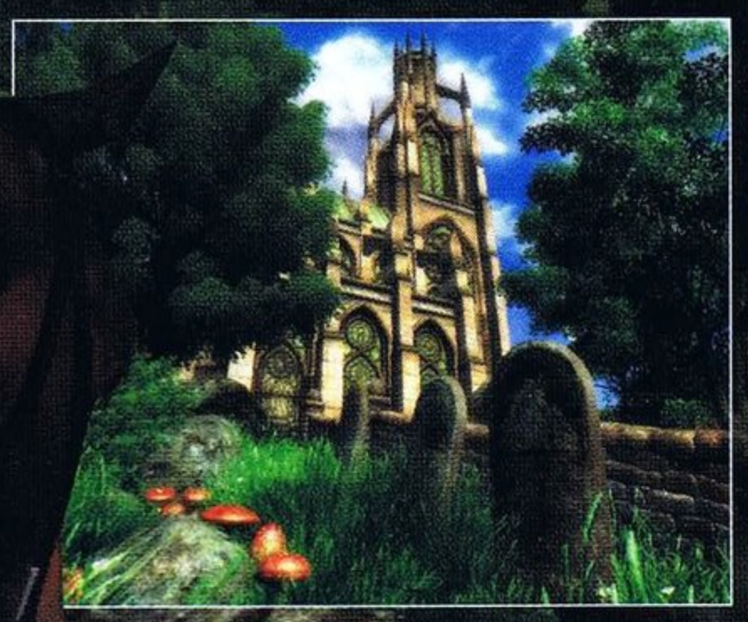
Eyewitness First Look

ELDER SCROLLS IV WILL WIPE OUT THE REST BECAUSE...
›The visuals are absolutely astonishing›It promises to fix everything that was wrong with *Morrowind*›Combat ditches dice in favour of real skill›It's huge... but not *too* huge



Stained glass windows. A crucial test of any graphics engine.



Our metal hero stares at misty mountains yonder and realises he can go there. Poor horsie.

Scoop!

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

May the fourth be with you, soon

Have fantasy role-playing games run out of ideas? In the words of Todd Howard, Executive Producer, "[*Oblivion*] takes the idea of a virtual fantasy world as far as it will go." Quite a statement, but even today Bethesda's previous *Elder Scrolls* game, *Morrowind*, continues to impress so we won't take such a promise lightly.

Although the world of *Oblivion* will be slightly smaller than *Morrowind*, you'll still be able to explore the world at will, with none of the arbitrary invisible restrictions of most RPGs. This is all the more impressive considering the visual acuity these early screens suggest – it's being developed for Xbox 2 and PS3 as well as PC.

Fans of the series will no doubt be intrigued to hear that *Oblivion* is set in the heart of Tamriel, in the Empire's capital Cyrodiil. But all is not well in the Imperial seat of power: the throne sits empty, and as a result the gates of *Oblivion* have opened, releasing demons into the mortal world. A bit like *Doom*, then, but without all those guns.

Otherworldly monsters, some familiar from previous *ES* games, come pouring through, and there are no prizes for guessing who'll have to fight them back and save the world. But at the other end of the scale, *Oblivion* impresses: skills such as lock-picking are now exercised in mini-games, with the objective that *every* activity must be fun.

Several RPGs since *Morrowind* that have boasted more charm and character, but we're craving that non-linear life-destroying *Elder Scrolls* goodness. .

README

Publisher TBA
Developer Bethesda
ETA Early 2006

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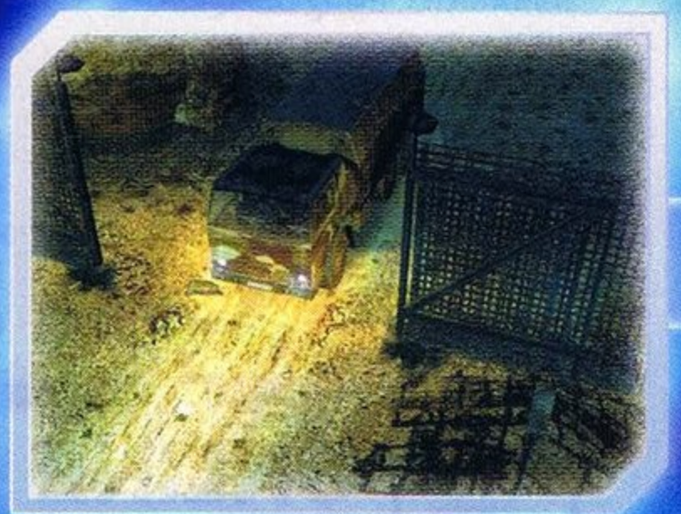

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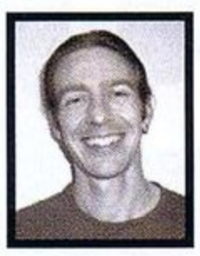
THIS IS HARDCORE

Around the genres in eighty sentences, possibly



Dan 'The Cleaner' Toose

THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

So *Doom 3* is now old news and although still on its way, *Half-Life 2* is now a known quantity – I think it's time to relay some more astonishing news. *Duke Nukem Forever* has gone gold... Actually, that's a downright lie. Only an alchemist could help *Duke*. So here are a few tongue-in-cheek morsels to keep the game in our thoughts… Until next year.

It has been seven years and five months since *Duke* was first announced, using the *Quake 2* engine. In the summer of 1998, it switched to the *Unreal* engine (it's now using *Unreal 3.0*).

A selection of games released since *Duke*'s announcement includes: *Thief 1*, *2*, and *3*, *GTA1*, *2*, *3* and *Vice City*, *System Shock 2*, *Fallout 1* and *2* and *Unreal*, *Unreal: Tournament*, *Unreal 2*, *Unreal Tournament 2003* and *2004*. Number of *Matrix* films released since 1997: Four. Haircuts I've had: 25.

And, finally, our favourite quote ever: George Broussard, Developer Epic's head honcho, on hearing publisher Take 2 suggesting that the game might be finished in 2003: "Take Two needs to STFU imo."

Russian around

You Are Empty is a dark tale set in '50s totalitarian Russia. Scientists have accidentally unleashed a flurry of human mutants on the city and naturally you must obliterate the ugly ones. It's looking very pretty, and it's twisted enough to be worth a look when it's out in 2005. Soviet themed and developed games appear to be on the rise, no?

The real reason Russian Wives magazine closed...

Itchy trigger finger? Contact Dan at dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Jere 'Into the group thing' Lawrence

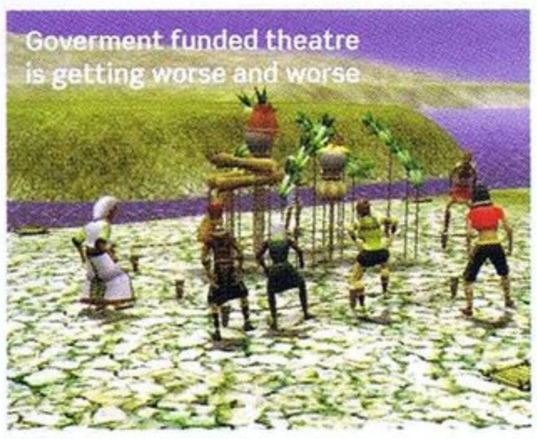
THIS IS...

ONLINE

Regular MMO gamers know that the spirit of co-operation doesn't reside within the vast majority of online gamers, which is why it could seem almost ironic that the first MMOG to feature a client for Windows, Linux and OSX is so passive. Given the rivalry that exists between users of these operating systems it would make for hilarious PvP battles. But that's not what a *Tale in the Desert 2* is about. Instead of slaying monsters, you breed them, and in the process discover a whole new conversational dynamic with other players, involving the love lives of scarab beetles.

Chaos Theory

TitD 2 also adds 200,000 unique trees and plants that are used to build structures, serve as cooking ingredients and as reagents for making lotions and potions. Experimentation is the key to progressing through the game



Goverment funded theatre is getting worse and worse

and because of the incredible number of recipe combinations possible, you can learn just as much from bumping into another player at random on a server as you can from a community website.

Other additions and alterations to the game include chariot stops used for teleportation to other parts of Egypt, new sound elements, and mercifully, avatars now run twice as fast on roads. It's a good thing too, as I have to make a delivery to the University of Architecture. Seems someone has discovered Stone Masonry.

Want some credit? Contact Jere at jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

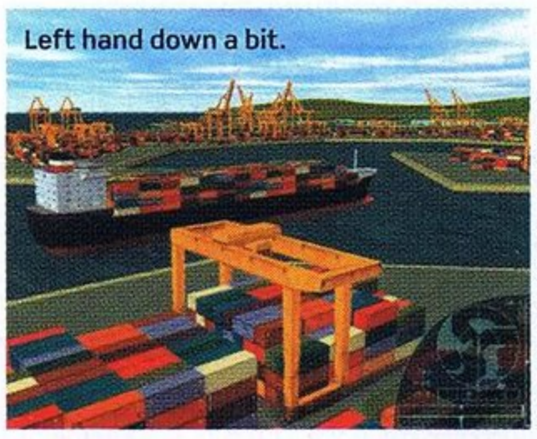
THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Tim 'Nice Buoy' Stone

Given the shoddiness of squad shooter *Soldner*, enthusiasm for Wings' next project might seem a little perverse. You really have to have played the game that came *before Soldner* to understand why ardent armourphiles were so excited to hear rumours of *Panzer Elite II* confirmed at a recent European games show. Intel is sparse at the moment but I have managed to extract the following.

Panzer Elite Action, still at least a year away, will feature 15 different steel steeds and an ambitious tripartite campaign that follows the fortunes of German, Russian, and US commanders from the days of Blitzkrieg to the fall of Berlin. Careless drivers can expect plenty of toppling timber and crumbling masonry thanks to the incorporation of the innovative destructible environment system used in *Soldner*.



Left hand down a bit.

Sink ports

Ramming the scenery is a recipe for ruin in *Ports of Call XXL*, an engrossing shipping sim that has been distracting me rather efficiently since I last wrote. An accessible combination of 2D *Tycoon*-style commerce and 3D seamanship, it's the work of the same two German jack-tars that created the classic Amiga original back in 1987. Hopefully a review will tie-up at PCGA's bustling wharf sometime soon but in the meantime sample the rat-infested, rust-pitted action at www.rdklein.com/poc/xxl/.

Barnacled bottom? Contact Tim at pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

Mark 'Land Grab' Donald

THIS IS...

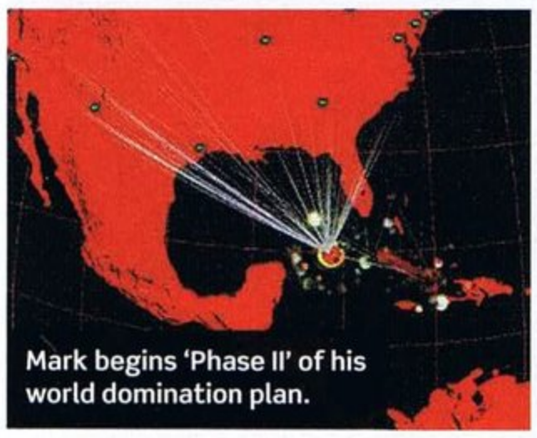
STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

You'd think, as a veteran games journalist, I had accumulated all the power a man could eat, yet as Henry Kissenger once said, "Power is the greatest aphrodisiac," which is why I can't resist the promise of *SuperPower 2*. It's a game of geo-politics, thrusting you onto the world stage as a head of state bent on expanding his nation's pride, wealth and security.

Border follies

My own head is already light with the possibility of dancing my despot's feet through the maze of realpolitik, trying to manipulate international relations to my advantage. Perhaps interests are best served by weaving a web of influence in the diplomatic arena of the United Nations; using treaties and alliances to secure borders and box in foes.

Or perhaps it would be best to play a belligerent economic and military powerhouse that likes to invade third world nations at the drop of an opinion poll. Then it's just a question of making a selection from the armed forces caddy bag. Destabilise the enemy with special forces; send in the tanks; fire off some strategic missiles or, hang it all, it's been a long day, let's go nuclear. A word of caution though, the original *SuperPower* failed to set the world alight. But developers Golemlabs have come a long way since then so why not net trawl and give the demo a tickle, and we'll have a review next issue.



Mark begins 'Phase II' of his world domination plan.

Exchange emissaries with Mark at
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

THIS IS...

RPG/ADVENTURE

One minute we're fantasising about exploring Altdorf with our buddies, and the next we're left mourning the cancellation of the anticipated *Warhammer Online* that would have made it all possible. However, news has come in from developer Climax that there may be hope after all for the game to see it through to release. Even though Games Workshop pulled out of the project, taking the majority of funding with them, the Warhammer community has encouraged Climax to look for another partner and ensure all their hard work doesn't go to waste. Development is still continuing as Climax work out the business side of things, and hopefully an announcement on the future of the project will come to light soon. So maybe we'll get to adventure through the Empire after all.

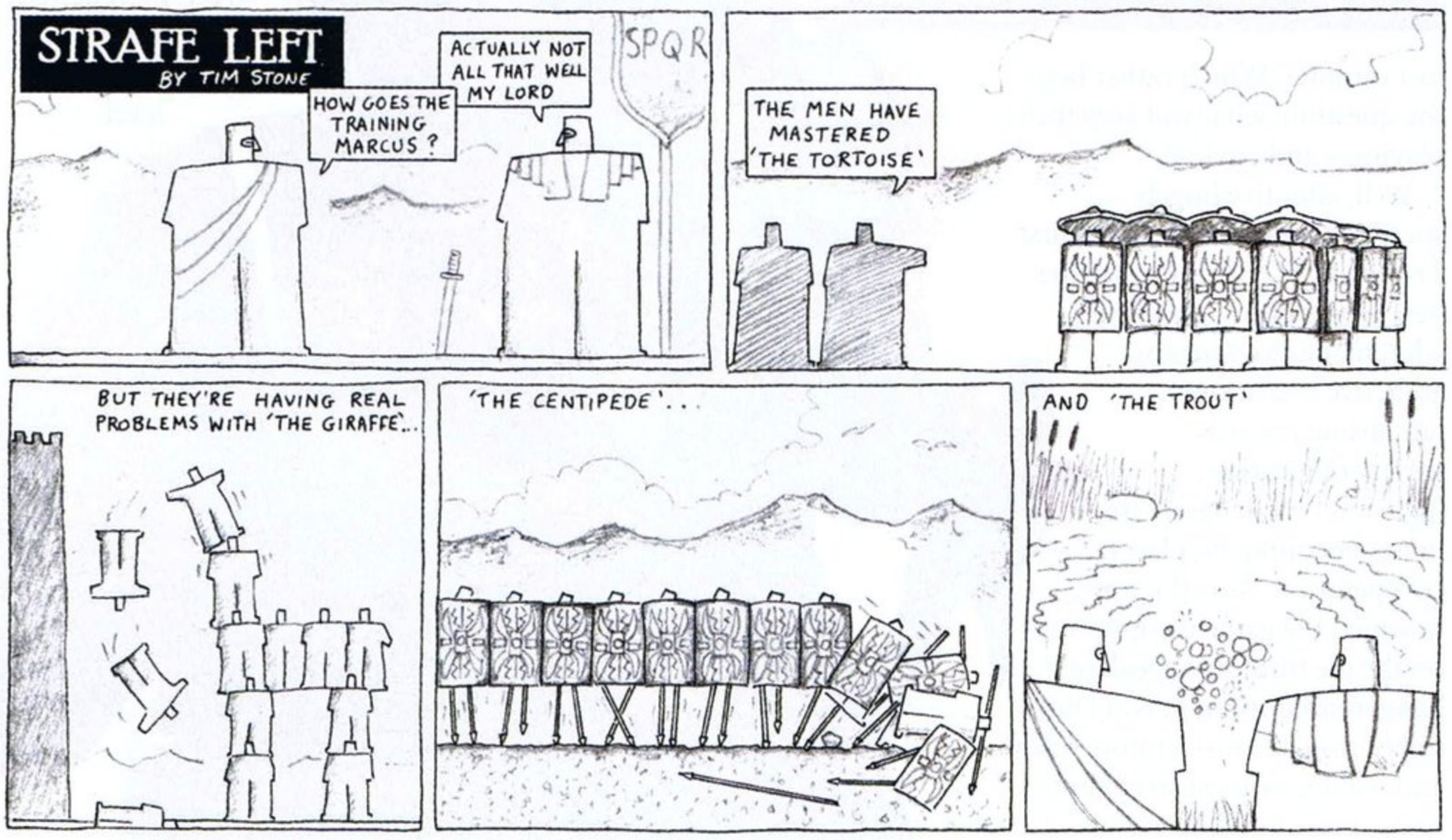
FFVTTR: clumsy title, slick superhero action.

Lootin' lots

Gas Powered Games has been toiling away on *Dungeon Siege II*. They've listened closely to fans' gripes and promise a deeper storyline, better loot and new powers. One handy tweak is the addition of a visual item comparison system, so you can instantly tell if something you've found is better than what your character has equipped. Thank the maker.

Eliot 'Loot-a-Lot' Fish

Beard in a tangle? Contact Eliot at
eliotf@derwenthoward.com.au


STRAFE LEFT
BY TIM STONE
HOW GOES THE TRAINING MARCUS?
ACTUALLY NOT ALL THAT WELL MY LORD
SPQR
THE MEN HAVE MASTERED 'THE TORTOISE'
BUT THEY'RE HAVING REAL PROBLEMS WITH 'THE GIRAFFE'...
'THE CENTIPEDE'...
AND 'THE TROUT'

James 'Mutant Camel' Cottee

THIS IS...

ODDBALL

What do cricket, *The Sims*, matches, and the SBS weather map all have in common? They're all fascinating to watch, even when nothing's really going on. It seems strange then that the genre of pure voyeurism is so neglected in the field of video games. There was *Little Computer People* for the C64 back in the 80s, and then... that was about it. Even *The Sims* doesn't really count, because it's a game with objectives. What if you just like to watch?

This potential market niche has been ignored by most game developers, but not all. Enter John Passfield and Steve Stamatiadis, creators of *Halloween Harry* and *Ty: The Tasmanian Tiger*. Back in '99 they set about reinventing the goldfish bowl genre for a new generation. The result was *The Chronicles of Jaruu Tenk*, a gaming microcosm somewhere between the Skywalker Ranch and Fraggle Rock.

Tickle me pink

The game allows you to set a chaser cam to Jaruu, his house mates, droid, and even their pet rodent. You can watch him read his mail, go though his bookshelf, or even watch him lose himself in diversions of his own – "This lamp is amazing to watch." It's an engrossing little screen saver, and unlike the squeaky clean *Animal Crossing*, there's the odd double entendre in the recurring dialogue.

While lacking commercial polish, The Chronicles of Jaruu Tenk works fine, and has been released as a free download. Simply head on over to **www.users.bigpond.com/jaruu/games/** to sample a game that's all about nothing.

Horny criters, watch them work rest and play...

'Honour the odd' or jape with James
jcottee@derwenthoward.com.au

Can Sony's success story have a sequel?

EverQuest II

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

Although *Ultima Online* should rightly be credited with popularising the massively multiplayer online role-playing genre, it is *EverQuest* that defined it. Sony Online Entertainment seem to have a knack for refining existing concepts; for pushing them beyond what seemed possible, for polishing them to an insane degree of quality and accessibility.

EverQuest II is no exception, and yet it's remarkable that such an old idea can still excite such anticipation, decades after IT students first experimented on university mainframes. After all, it's down to the players to create the story in such games, isn't it? Well, no. Sony are going further than ever to populate and enrich their world to the extent that the game does not rely on the players to fill in the gaps.

That said, *EQII* is still firmly aimed at enticing existing MMO players – by far the biggest potential audience – to try a new addiction, but Sony are hoping to get newcomers interested as well, with an easier learning curve and the kind of presentation that would put most singleplayer games to shame. And it seems to be working: newcomers to the entire genre are captivated after just minutes. Which rather begs the question: what will *keep* them playing – and paying?

Well, after five hugely successful years running the first *EverQuest*, SOE know what the hell they're doing. Retaining what made *EverQuest* so addictive is crucial: tantalising rewards, variety of location, high-level challenges, rare items, encouraging player co-operation. As is the way in which the game is supported on the go. Rumours speak of a hangar-sized room in San Diego full of in-game moderators ready and willing to assist struggling players and admonish the ill-behaved.

THE PITCH
The classic MMORPG monster-basher reborn with gorgeous graphics and Christopher Lee's voice.

Is it just us, or is his sword so magic that it doesn't even cast a shadow?

Adventurers eagerly await the creation of monsters.

ON THE DVD See the online world of Norrath in motion, in the video on this month's disc > Movies

Players migrating from the original will find plenty to reward their years of level-treadmilling; not in tangible items but the new game's backstory. Set some time in the future beyond *EverQuest*, the world has been laid waste by a mysterious apocalyptic event. Veterans will recognise locations and even some structures, but these will be in ruins. What exactly happened is a thread to be traced by inquisitive players.

Complete with unfeasibly busty elves

The visuals are another major step forward but it's a shame you can't *hear* the game. Incredibly, *all* the dialogue is recorded and delivered by actors. *All* of it. Indeed, the major NPC bad guy, Lucan D'Lere, is voiced by none other than Christopher Lee. So rather than mechanically interacting with quest-givers via text boxes, they'll actually call out to you in the street. Even better, if you're a particularly high level

character, then you'll actually draw stares of respect from NPC bystanders as you strut through town in your fancy magic armour.

But it's the early hours – minutes, even – that hold the key to keeping people playing beyond their free trial. Again the Sony approach is that more is, well, more. Character creation is obsessively detailed; the 16 races alone offer a tough choice, and we can imagine serious players agonising for hours over this stage. Getting a modest home when you enter Norrath will also be a welcome first gift, and the ability to expand, modify and decorate this home a further attraction still.

But can *EverQuest II* really attract new players to its online world? A determination to further stylise its high fantasy design, complete with unfeasibly busty elves, is unlikely to tempt those who prefer the slightly more understated worlds of *Galaxies* or *EVE Online*. And the fear remains that you won't get the most out of the game without putting in several hours every day. While this latter problem has yet to materialise, it's something Sony would be wise to solve if existing MMORPG players are slow to make the jump into the beautiful new world of Norrath.

ROSS ATHERTON

README

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Sony Online Entertainment
Link www.everquest2.com
More *EverQuest* than ever – but is there more to it than that? We hope so.

SAY HELLO TO SOME OLD FIENDS...

EverQuest II has seen some character-class overhauling, but there are still some old familiar faces

Dirty Dark-Elves make great assassins, for they are cruel at heart and like a bit of backstabbing. Members of the scout archetype, they're also good at reconnaissance.

If a Shadowknight treads on your foot, *you* should say sorry. That's if you don't want a host of fear, despair and hatred spells cast on you for getting in his way.

Ever ready with a bow and arrows, the Ranger is a classic character class. Another a member of the Scout group, the Ranger is a natural tracker and locator.

NO. I'D RATHER KILL RATS.

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MASSIVELY EPIC ONLINE

COMING SOON

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

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PCGA puts the 'you' into 'valour'

Men of Valour

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

Can you imagine going to war? Not some computer-controlled war conducted from cockpit and conning tower, but a real war – paranoid jungle patrols, half-starved men in burnt-out bunkers, panicky skirmishes in rubble-strewn streets… If *Full Spectrum Warrior* (see review, page 66) shows how formulaic and antiseptic modern conflict can be, it's no surprise that this is the third Vietnam-set shooter we've had in as many months.

THE PITCH
Grubby shooting action in Vietnam, with all the death and swearing that suggests.

For *Men of Valour: The Vietnam War* brings a very basic and unpredictable war to our screens. From the undergrowth spring civvies-clad Vietcong, sporting AK-47s and suicidal tendencies while grenades rain without warning. What's more, *Men of Valour* doesn't fall prey to *Conflict: Vietnam*'s nightmare of hidden snipers and pointlessly claustrophobic jungle corridors.

Like the team's previous work, *Medal of Honour: Allied Assault*, progress is directed by simple instructions and cues on the on-screen compass. So while the settings seem expansive, with far-off horizons, you're just as restricted as in the likes of *Call of Duty*.

Atmospheric music and sound effects give *MoV* a strong sense of place, as does the battle chatter from both sides, including lots of swearing from your grunt chums. As you progress, the game attempts to forge emotional ties between you and your fellows, providing some powerful moments should they take the body-bag express home. As the game's hero, Dean Shepard, successfully completing early missions brings you to the attention of head honchos, who give you increasingly important and risky missions. This culminates in 1968 at Hue, at the height of the Tet Offensive.

ON THE DVD Charlie says play the multiplayer demo and stay slinky for the singleplayer next ish > Demos

Much depends on these final weeks of development time. The latest version we played failed to impress us with the quality of its AI – both friendly and enemy – with soldiers often oblivious to each other. We're also hoping the underlying narrative and accompanying dialogue manages to raise *Men of Valour* above the ordinary standards of its Vietnam-based comrades.

ROSS ATHERTON

README
Publisher Vivendi
Developer 2015
Link www.menofvalorgame.com
Final tinkering could yet make this a worthy successor to MoH's shooter crown.

SMELLS OF NAPALM
Men of Valour doesn't shy away from the nasty side of war (*Is there any other side?* – Ed) though nasty swearing is absent and you can be fairly sure your chums won't be running around stabbing civilians.

WAR ON BUSH
Vietcong are never happier than when bursting out of dense foliage, screaming anti-American rudeness. You might get scripted mortar, airstrike or napalm support, but it's down to the grunts in the end.

CHAIN GANG
Occasionally you'll get behind the trigger of a fixed position – or, in this case, a not-so-fixed position. Spray all and sundry from the safety of this Huey, though you won't get to pilot it. This ain't no flight sim.

"Look! I can see Richard Nixon's face in that cloud."

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PC GAMER

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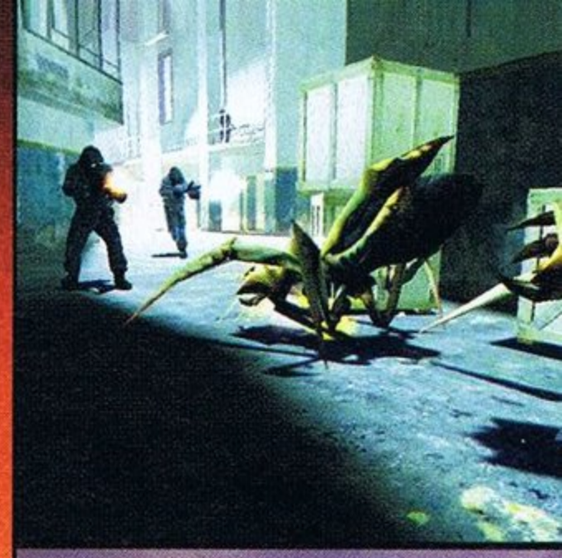
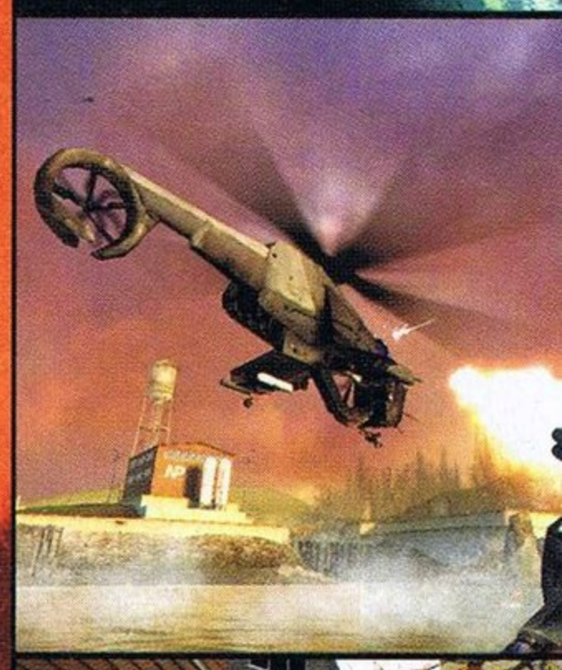
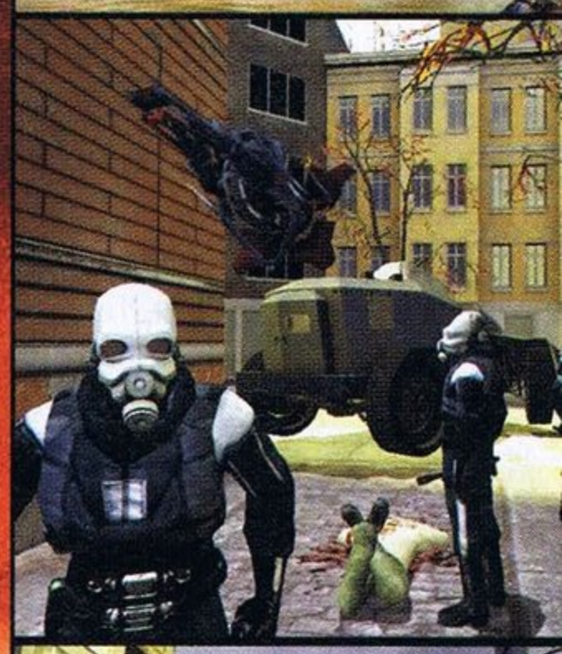
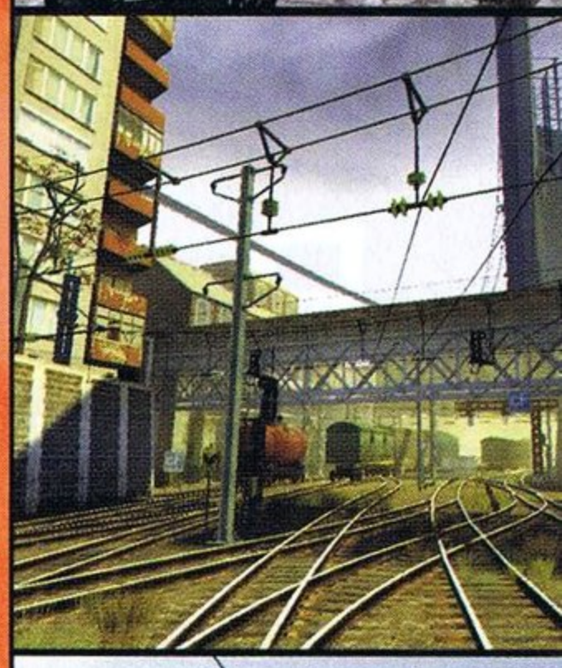
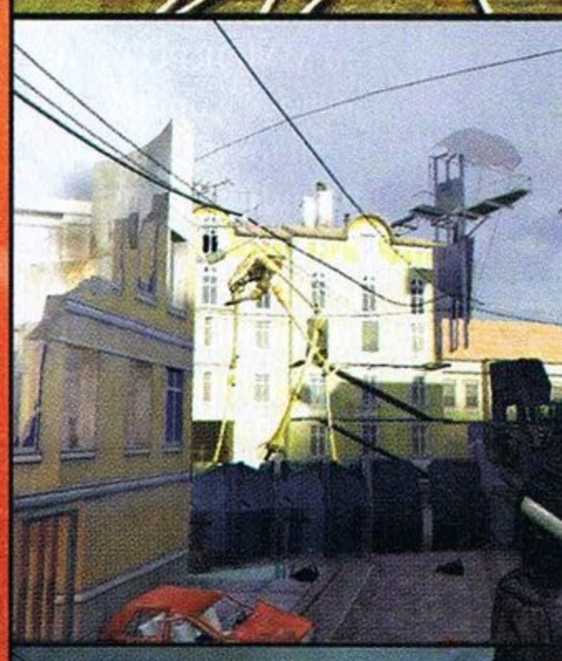
NOW. By taking the suspense, challenge and visceral charge of the original, and adding startling new realism and responsiveness, Half-Life 2 opens the door to a world where the player's presence affects everything around him, from the physical environment to the behaviors even the emotions of both friends and enemies.











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Postcards from Teldrassil

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

RELEASE DEC-JAN

THE PITCH
All the good stuff from the MMORPG genre, without the need to devote your life to it to get ahead.

Blizzard's success with two very different gaming genres, the RTS and RPG, has proven that they're a developer that understands what works and what doesn't. With *World of Warcraft* next on their agenda, it prompts the question - What doesn't work in an MMORPG for the average gamer? Perhaps it's the unending sprawl of 3D regions, sparsely populated and devoid of any vibe or character? RTS games are not about personality, but Blizzard's *Warcraft* series bears the sort of ethos a 'character driven' game like *Everquest* never came close to matching. It's due in no small part to *Warcraft's* animation and art style that's bold, distinct and infinitely more welcoming than mock-realism.

Maybe it's the thing that put many off, chiefly that it can take a huge commitment of time to see tangible results. *Diablo* was Blizzard's shining example of how to keep people interested – keep giving them something. A level here, a new magic weapon there, and players logged off an hour or two later with a tangibly more robust hero that would wipe the floor with the character that first logged on.

Watching my Night Elf hunter evolve immediately and constantly over a few sessions of play, it was obvious Blizzard have melded the progression of *Diablo* with the charm and rich background of their medieval RTS series to make *World of Warcraft* more enticing than your average MMORPG.

That said, we won't pretend that *WoW's* core gameplay is a radical departure from the usual MMORPG formula. You rest, you group, you fight, you level, you create, you trade and so on. However, *WoW* feels different, let's follow this young hunter's first steps down his path to adventure and glory.

Of course the first step in an RPG is character creation, which only takes as long as it does for you to mix and match for that must-have medieval look. In fact, other than choose race, gender and class, it's all about tailoring your look. Thankfully there's no re-roll system so the megalomaniacs out there don't get stuck trying to get the perfect start.

Then the story, and this is where WoW truly separates itself from the typical MMORPG. Our sharp-lugged hunter's people the Night Elves have grown a new World Tree, Teldrassil, an entirely wooded isle off the north end of Kalimdor. This was an act of magic, not of nature, and it would appear the tree has some sort of malign taint. This wrongness manifests itself in the form of mutant boars, spiders and other woodland creatures, and when the elder by the edge of the clearing tells me to go kill ten of the things in nature's name, it makes sense.

Of course, that's formulaic, but what stops it feeling like a lame hoop to jump through is that new, very different quests become available quicker than they can all be done. Our roving archer collects shreds of armour and trinkets that cash in for enough to augment his gear each time he ventures out, making each trip worthwhile. Something most MMORPGs fail to manage.

After venturing into a spider infested cave to retrieve a pre-hatched spiderling for a needy anthropologist, he next finds a critically poisoned kinsman up a path by the cave, who our hunter then saves by gathering reagents for his alchemist friend to whip up a magical anti-venin… At which point it becomes obvious that more suitable challenges lie outside the safety of your home.

Taking the lone path out of the clearing into a huge series of valleys, lushly fleshed out with majestic, vibrantly colourful leafy canopies above. The

ground shakes and the sound of something massive thunders towards you around a hill, but it's only the giant ancient protectors keeping the town of Dalanaar safe from the deeper, darker, more dangerous woods.

I will skip details to make your first journey through Teldrassil just as engaging and challenging as it was for our hunter. What I will say though is that very rarely was he ever suddenly in peril too dire to deal with, and those embarrassing shocks only served to keep him more vigilant, as floating to his corpse was a drag.

There was always a quest to do, always something to buy, and there'll always be a lot more to say next issue as the *World of Warcraft* and its features beg to be explored further.

DAN TOOSE

README

Publisher Vivendi
Developer Blizzard
Link www.worldofwarcraft.com
All the charm, character and wonder of Warcraft in an MMORPG thatC.

Bits of... stuff... flying everywhere. That'll be those particle effects.

STUCK ON YOU
The supernatural violence can fling strapping soldiers about, pinning them to walls and ripping blood-spouting bits off. The longer this goes unexplained, the more effective the suspense will be.

SPLISHY SPLASHY
A popped knee spurts like a claret Vesuvius. Monolith's impressive new graphics engine enables accurate location damage and a subtle spectrum of wounds. Gushing gore almost goes unnoticed in many shooters – but *F.E.A.R.* has ways to give the viscera more impact, such as the empty room you wander into... empty but for bullet casings and blood.

Mummy, I'm scared

F.E.A.R.

RELEASE LATE 2005

THE PITCH
Ghosts, guns and ghouls turn the shoot-'em-up on its head. Then pop its head like an egg.

We've been thinking rather a lot about fear lately – the emotion, that is, rather than the game. Because for all that *Doom 3* made us jump with fright and surprise, true fear is a more difficult thing to provoke in a player. It takes timing. Suspense. Imagination.

First Encounter Assault and Recon (*F.E.A.R.*) could be the most terrifying experience since *Thief: Deadly Shadow*'s infamous Cradle level. Despite putting you in the role of a tooled-up terrorist-basher, the game pulls the rug of trigger-happy invincibility out from under your feet with a supernatural presence beyond the rules of bullets and swift death. The ghostly girl, around whom violence and gore explode in showers, is an unexplained, rarely seen force, and terror is born from the unexpected, the unknown, the uncontrollable.

Initially, however, things are more predictable (albeit still hugely impressive). Your counter-terrorist unit faces bad guys in tight, twisting indoor locations. Hardly a new premise, but dragged into the 21st century using an all-new graphics engine, not Monolith's traditional Lithtech gubbins. Shadows, particles, lighting effects, physics and ragdolling are all deeply convincing. Time will tell how long *Half-Life 2* will sit at the top of the visuals tree.

F.E.A.R. may well end up being a truly horrifying experience, but it'll be a disappointment if the action fails to live up to its early promise. A mouthwatering arsenal of vaguely futuristic weaponry, including automatic rifles, sub-machineguns and grenades, promises satisfying gunplay; but there's more to the combat than this. Monolith are attempting to incorporate hand-to-hand fighting too, an ambitious element which we've yet to see work appreciably in an FPS. Depending where you're aiming when close to an enemy, and depending on whether you're moving, crouching, running or jumping, a context-appropriate attack will be delivered, thus keeping the interface simple at a moment when timing is everything.

Add player-controlled, slow-motion effects and a dose of film influences, and *F.E.A.R.* becomes a very exciting prospect. Monolith's experience with *TRON 2.0*, *No One Lives Forever 2* and *Aliens Versus Predator 2* demonstrates they have the ability to create a consistently atmospheric experience, not just another shooter with fancy effects. Anyone else working on an FPS for next year should be afraid.

ROSS ATHERTON

README
Publisher Vivendi
Developer Monolith
Link www.[illegible].com
Potentially the most authentically scary game we've yet seen on the PC.

All that bitty, incidental detail is just the thing to convince us the scary stuff is *really happening*.

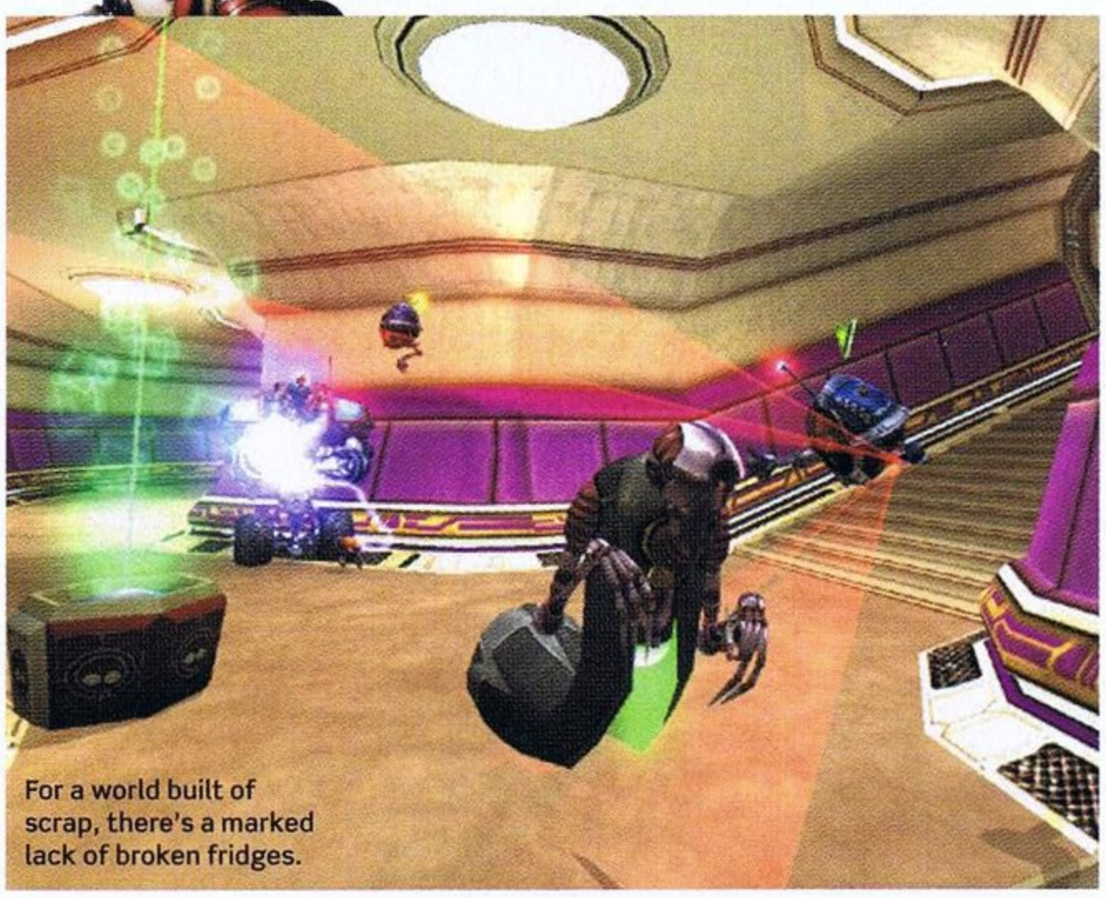
Uh-oh. Weird stuff happening. As if gun-toting terrorists weren't enough.

Whoaaa. Scary Little Girl alert. Now you're in trouble.

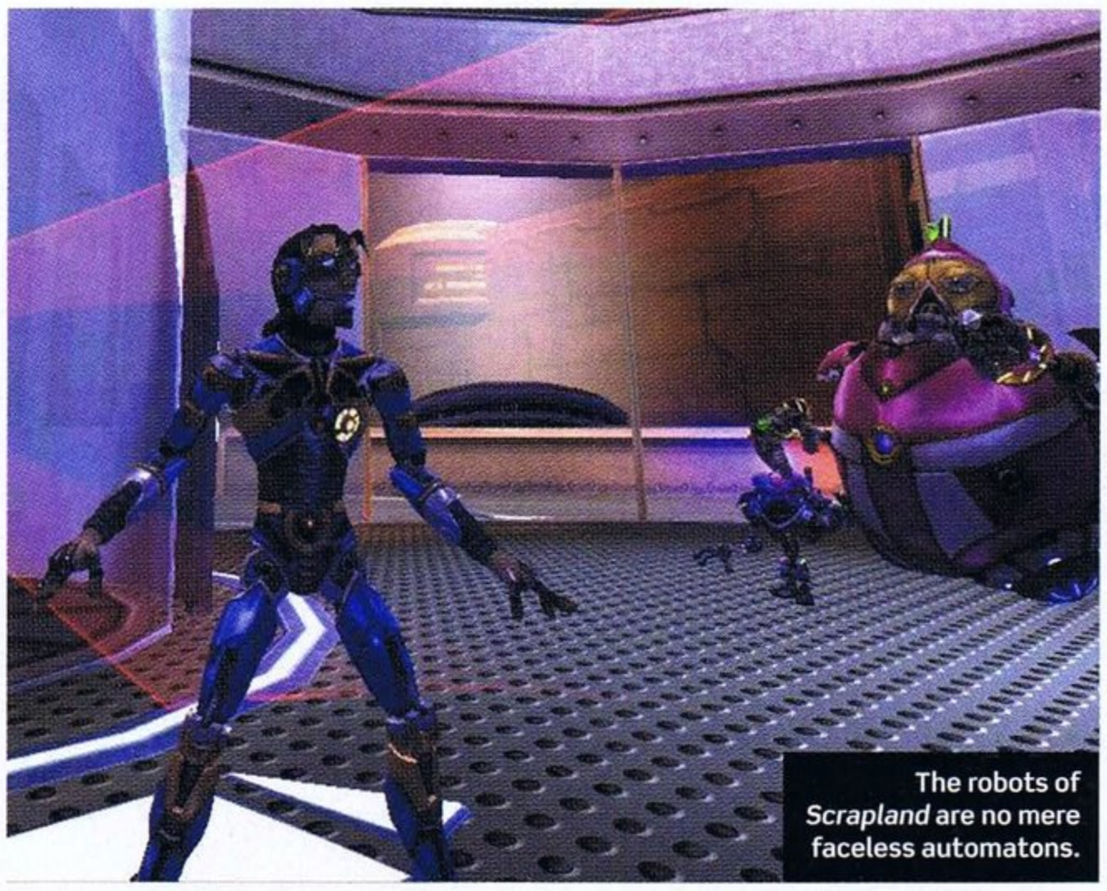
I, comedy robot

Scrapland

REVIEW NEXT ISSUE

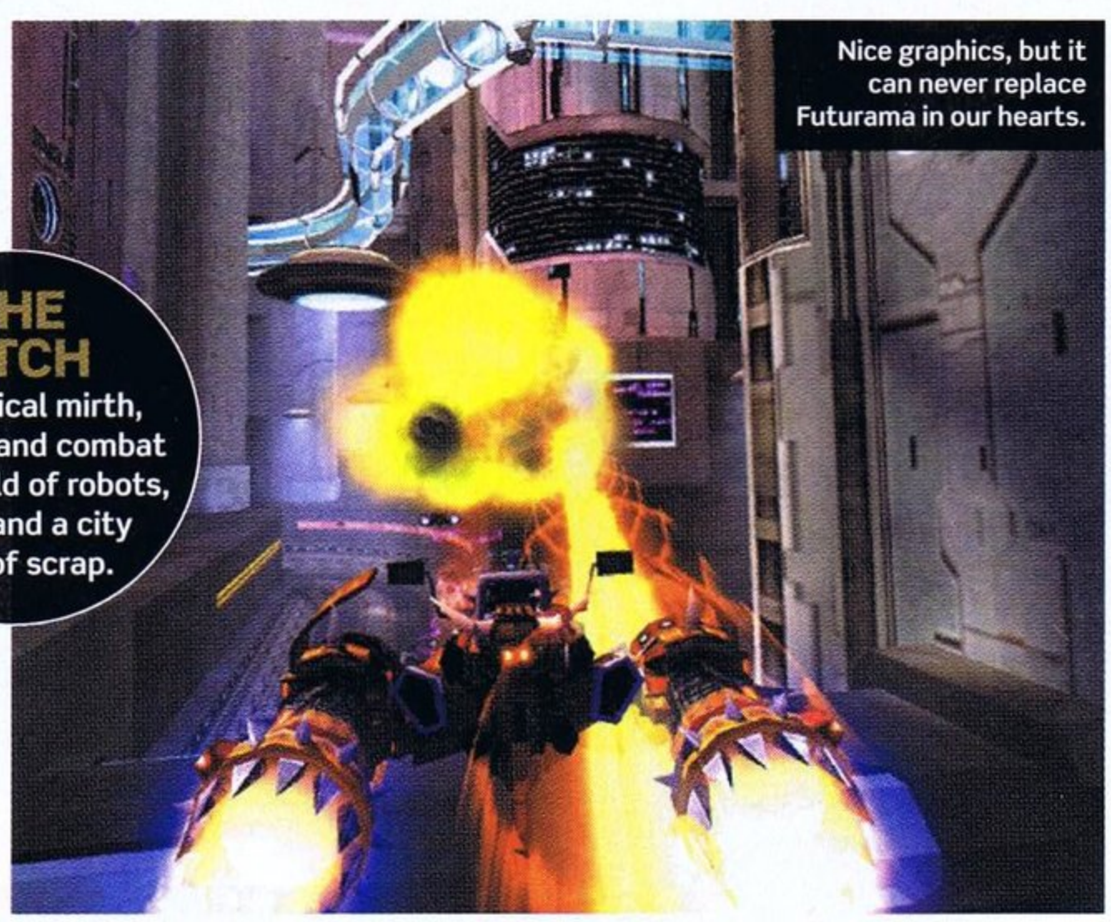


For a world built of scrap, there's a marked lack of broken fridges.



The robots of *Scrapland* are no mere faceless automatons.

THE PITCH
Mechanical mirth, missions and combat – in a world of robots, lasers and a city built of scrap.



Nice graphics, but it can never replace Futurama in our hearts.

Grand Theft Auto with robots. That's the heavily implied comparison publishers Enlight and *Scrapland*'s Spanish developers Mercury Stream go to great pains to make. It's a bold claim but, in truth, a good way to explain this oddity's strange blend of third-person action, dialogue and motorised missions.

But there are no baseball bats and foul language here, no sir. There are no people either: *Scrapland*'s world is a futuristic planet and city made entirely of scrap parts and inhabited solely by robots. No ordinary robots either. *Scrapland*'s intention is to create a consistently bizarre world with cartoon stylings and a surreal air that lends individuals a bit more personality than you might expect from your average automaton.

Your character, D-Tritus (geddit?), is a newcomer to the world and must seek his fortune in the cyber city of Chimera. He's also keen to upgrade his spluttering Reliant Robin of a ship into something a little more Rolls Royce-y.

But to get anywhere in Chimera, D-Tritus must introduce himself to the various important shady and not-so-shady characters. Our chrome-dome chum explores Chimera by touching down at bases, shops, factories and other centres of *Scrapland* life. Then, as in *GTA*, D-Tritus continues his adventures on foot, meeting other robots who reveal more about this odd world and offer missions via the magic of cut-scenes and spoken dialogue.

Part of *Scrapland*'s weird web involves 'The Great Database'. Because D-Tritus – and everyone else – is a computerised being, your character may be regularly uploaded to this near-mythical storage heaven which effectively saves your game. A tidy way to explain the wizardry of saving and loading without breaking the game's narrative, at least.

A futuristic city made entirely of scrap parts

But life is never that straightforward. D-Tritus' arrival in the world of *Scrapland* coincides with a series of murders. Before long, you're tasked with getting to the bottom of these digital deaths by tracking down suspects, questioning the city's notable figures and putting two and two together.

But what of the involvement of American McGee in this project? Famously, McGee was part of the original *Doom* team at id and he was brought in by Enlight to guide the game's direction and polish up the script.

Although McGee's previous title, *Alice*, took a very dark view of human life and was renowned for its twisted humour, *Scrapland* seems at first glance altogether lighter in approach. Indeed, D-Tritus himself comes across as an altogether too saccharine a hero for our tastes – all wide-eyed naivety and squeaky voice. We get enough of that with young Tim in the office, thanks very much.

Still, we're hopeful that the remaining weeks of development will ensure all 't's are crossed, 'i's dotted and that 'S' gets firmly bolted on to the title.

ROSS ATHERTON

ON THE CD A demo built entirely from spare robot parts awaits you on this month's disc > Demos

README

Publisher Enlight
Developer Mercury Stream Entertainment
Link www.scrapland.com
Imaginative actioner with a unique style. If the script's up to scratch, a potential hit

What the *System Shock* people did next

Bioshock

RELEASE 2006

Excuse us while our heart rates return to something approaching normality. We've just hear that Irrational Software, the enormously talented development house from our nation's capital (and Boston, MA) that brought us *Freedom Force* and *Tribes: Vengeance* are working on a 'spiritual successor' to their best, and one of our favourite, games: *System Shock 2*.

Bah. I wanted System Shock. Explain this 'spiritual successor' business.
Our hearts pine for SHODAN too. But this has every potential to be just as terrifying, just as open-ended and filled with just as much possibility. We're breathless. It's the next generation in 'emergent simulation', – the game lets you play how you like to play.

Why get so excited?
Part of what made *System Shock 2* so exciting was its open design. You explored a functioning space-cruiser and were able to go back and forth-between floors at will. *Bioshock* is set in an abandoned laboratory, built during WWII, yet refitted after years of dereliction for use in a new wave of genetic experimentation. Paint peels from the walls, plastic curtains billow in drafts; strange tests and experiments are conducted in glass jars. Or were conducted. Since a nameless event, the laboratory has been vacated, leaving terrifying fusions of insects and humans to wander freely about the complex, along with a mortuary's worth of rotting corpses.

It sounds like a cross between The Fly and the Quatermass Experiment.
Irrational quote The Fly, and specifically the questions it raises about humanity as part of *Bioshock*'s inspiration. At what point in the film does Jeff Goldblum lose his humanity? In *Bioshock*, if a vile scientist has grafted a heart, lungs, arms, legs and a brain to an insectoidal torso, could that creature be considered human? If you harvest the DNA of a monster and merge it with your own, are you altering your species?

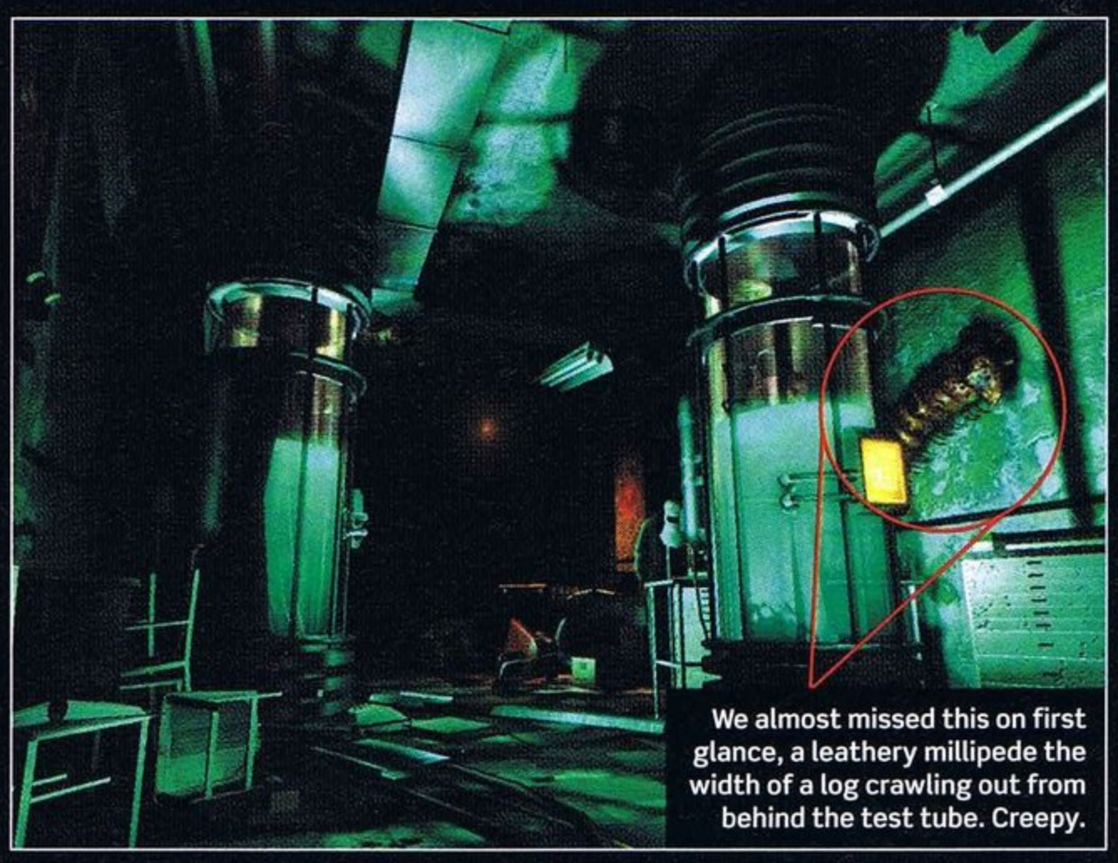
THE PITCH
Rid an abandoned laboratory of a foul genetic plague, using tommy guns and designer DNA.

Merge their DNA with your own? That sounds disgusting.
Yes. It could *sound* disgusting. For many, their over-riding memory of *System Shock 2* is one of absolute terror brought on by the sounds: of SHODAN breaking into your world, or of psionic monkeys screeching as they tore into your flesh. The mind behind those horrible sound effects, Eric Brosius, is still working for Irrational.

Yes, but I meant the creatures sound horrible.
Again, yes. The creatures in *Bioshock* are split into three castes: drones, predators and soldiers. Irrational are working on what they call an 'AI ecology'. They're trying to imbue their creations with instinctive behaviour patterns; strange yet biologically intuitive. If a monster is hungry, it will eat you. If a monster doesn't like the colour of your shirt, it will eat you. If you enter a monster's territory, it will eat you, then mark your bones. If you're not about, a drone will search the complex for rotting flesh, which they feed upon, and recycle into useable genetic gloop, before returning to the hive. Plasmids (genetic loops usually harvested from bacteria) from drones can be used to enhance your own abilities – by extracting plasmids from extremophile drones, you'll be able to alter the climate turning the heat way up and sweating the monsters out.

Can't I just shoot them?
Philistine. Irrational are making plans for the usual selection of weapons, yet there's a twist. You'll be able to scavenge for upgrades throughout the complex, improving your carbine way beyond the manufacturer's expectations. However, you'll have to choose between applying the upgrades to your weapons or a biological scanning device. Take snapshots of the enemy and you'll be able to analyse them for weak points or chinks in their armour.

TIM EDWARDS



We almost missed this on first glance, a leathery millipede the width of a log crawling out from behind the test tube. Creepy.

README

Publisher TBA
Developer Irrational Software
Link www.irrationalgames.com
Irrational have pedigree, imagination and style. This is the successor to *System Shock2*.

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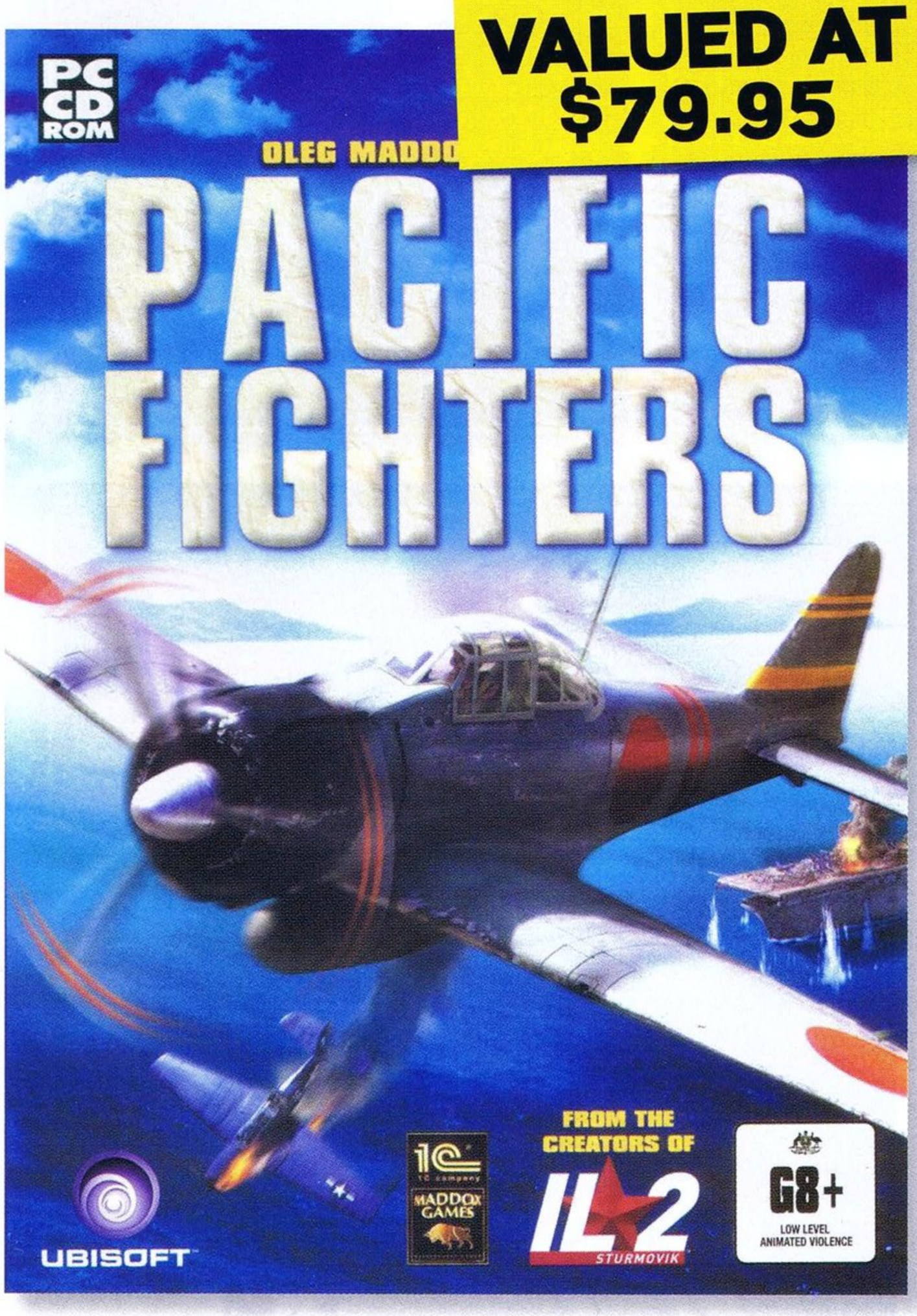

Searching for the best combat flight-sim money can buy? Securing a GOLD GAME award this issue, Pacific Fighters from **Ubisoft** is PC GAMES ADDICT's reccomendation. However, maybe you shouldn't buy it... Not because it's unworthy, but rather because readers who subscribe for 12 months will receive Pacific Fighters for FREE.

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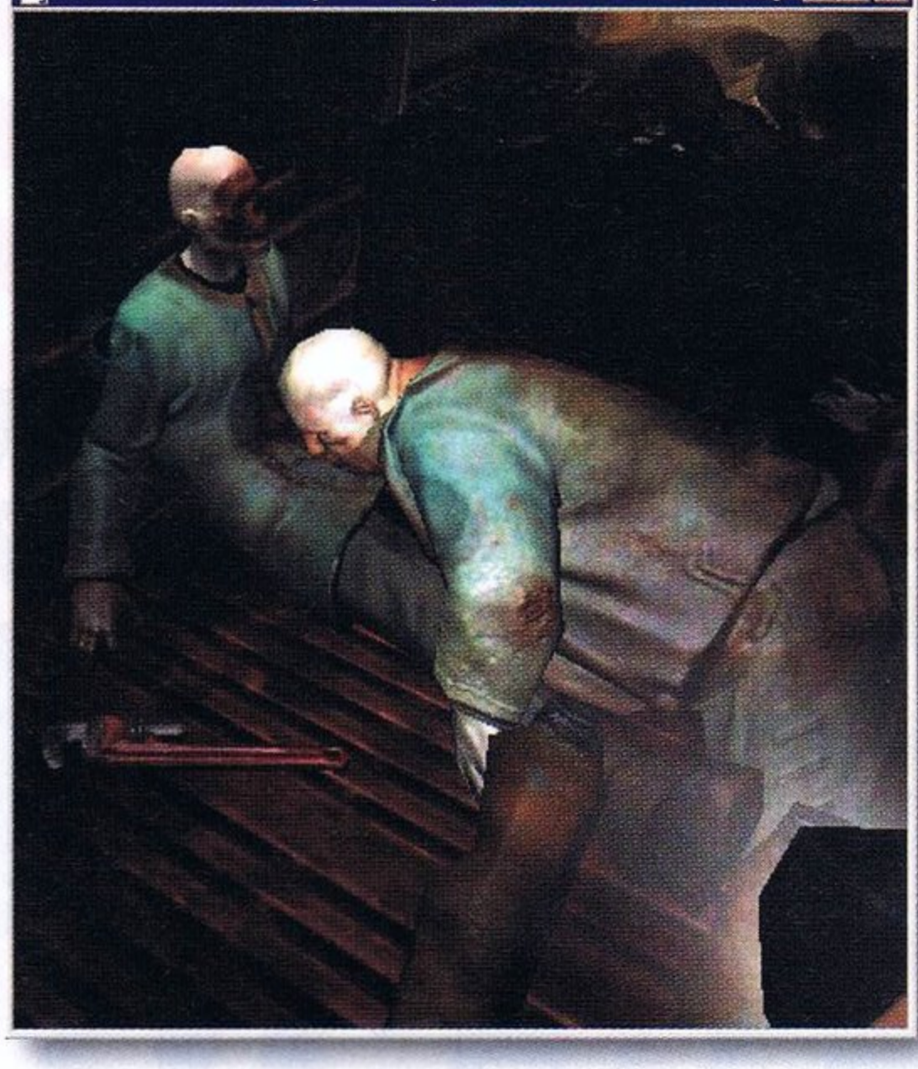
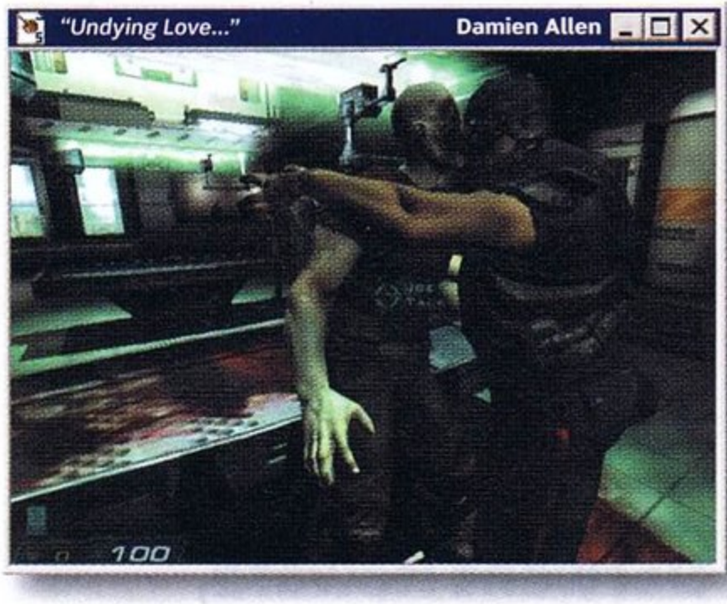
"Okay Boromir, you can have the damn ring now..." — Jamie Fieldus

THE BEST!

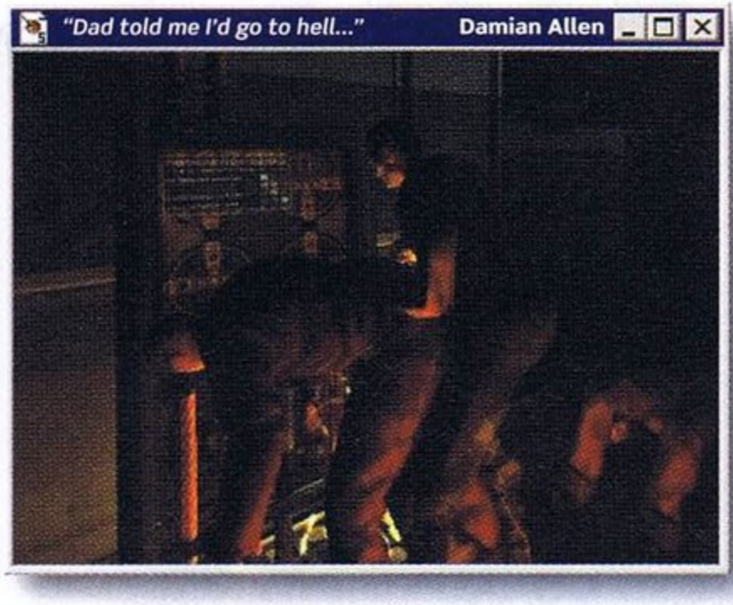
"You're incredible. First you blow my mind, then..." — Pokemonkey



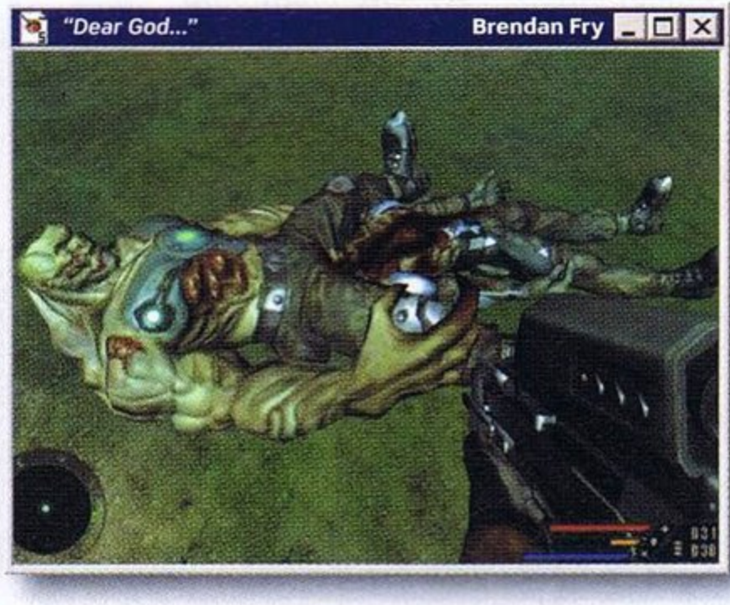
"Undying Love..." — Damien Allen



"Dad told me I'd go to hell..." — Damian Allen

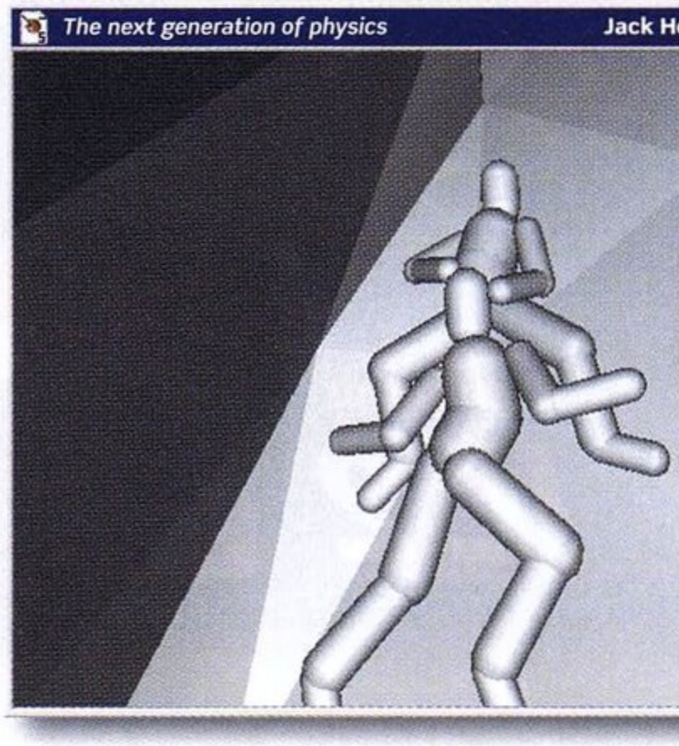


"Dear God..." — Brendan Fry



"Yes, Friday night would be good..." — Jamie Hoets

The next generation of physics — Jack Hodsen



In the recycle bin this month, as voted by Art...
What the hell do you think this magazine's about, Jack? Your contribution may be dressed up as "retro chic nostalgic irony," but you and I know it's just smut. *SMUUUTT!* OK, you nearly won. Try again next month.
+ More snaps on the disc (Galleries), if you can live with yourself.

CREATIVE

Need a capture program? Use IrfanView on the cover disc! Then send your snap & witty caption to pcga@derwenthoward.com.au with "SNAP" as the subject. Funniest entry each month wins an excellent set of Creative T770 speakers!

From Sid Meier,
Award Winning
Creator of the
Civilization®
Series

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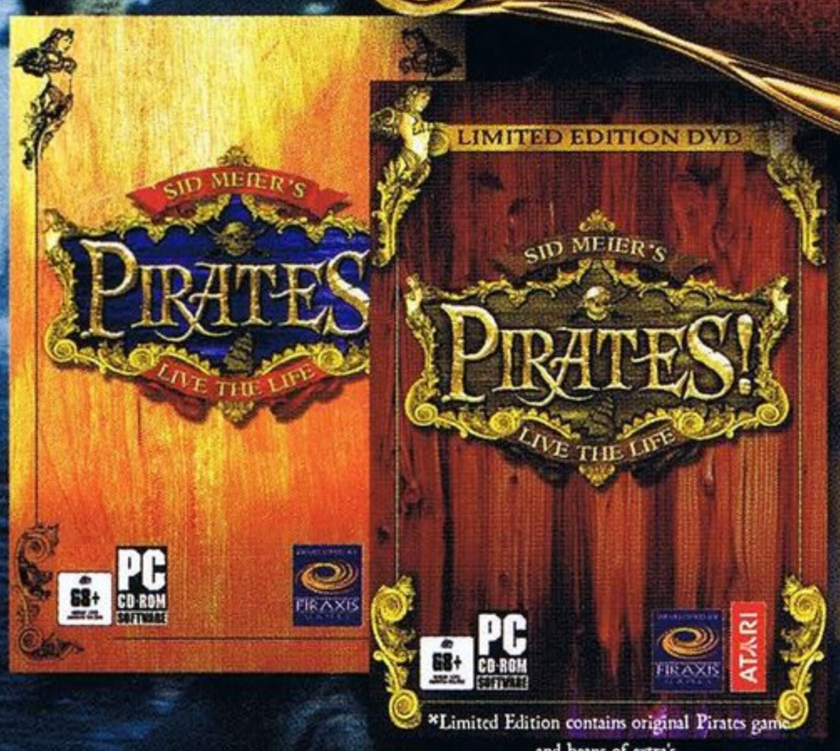
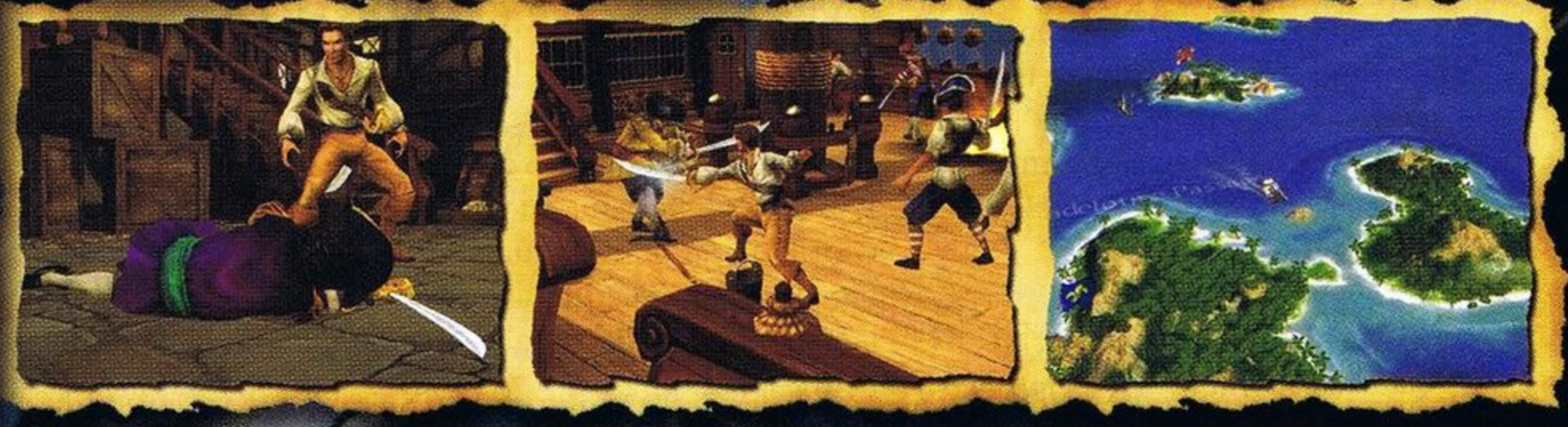
SID MEIER'S PIRATES!



*Limited Edition contains original Pirates game and heaps of extra's.



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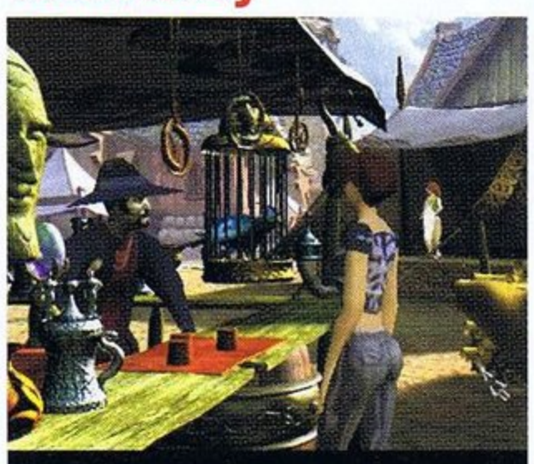
THE LONGEST JOURNEY
Reviewed by Tom Hardy



"No Parrot Sketch jokes, or else."

Approaching this, I was only prepared for the fluid and entertaining adventure game promised by so many journalists. For the first chapter or so, this was what I found. The voice acting was superb, the characters lively, the puzzles clear and never unfair. But quickly I realised that this game was something very special indeed. The compelling yet shady plot drew me in so closely that interaction with the world and its people felt real, and almost its own reward. Developer Ragnar Tornquist is a storyteller at heart, and this is evident as he weaves events together in both of the game's worlds to form a stunningly cohesive whole.

Each world is unique, and so well fleshed-out that it's hard to credit you're playing the same game all the way through. You care about these worlds and the people in them to such an extent that you feel miserable when the game is over, yet elated you had the opportunity to experience it. The only way to minimise the negative is to pass it on, to recommend it to others. And that's what I'm doing now.

Tom's Rating 95%

PCGA *responds: It's unique: an adult story told with total passion. We salute Tornquist, and any gamers who took a chance on it.*

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
Reviewed by William Wright

PCGA 23, Score 91%

While browsing the *Thief: Deadly Shadows* forums I noticed it had received rather bad press from many gamers. I'm not sure I understand why. It has an excellent storyline, exciting and tense gameplay and one of the scariest levels I've ever played in a long time. How can this little gem of a game cause people to rise up in anger at developers Ion Storm? Sure, it has mediocre ragdoll physics, is relatively short and the freeform city levels weren't nearly as good as they were put out to be, but these are relatively minor flaws.

As I considered the conundrum, I realised something. These people don't hate *Thief* because it's a bad game at all, they hate it because it's so different from the original titles. Nostalgia is overriding their sensibilities. They miss the original *Thief* experience. And come to think of it, so did I. It was missing the atmosphere of *Thief*s 1 and 2. Gone were those iconic steampunk robots. Missing were the enormous, get-lost-all-the-time levels. These are what defined *Thief* as a game.

"I'm sure I saw that *Thief*-ness somewhere."

In *Deadly Shadows*, *Thief* lost its *Thief*-ness.

William's Rating 85%

PCGA *responds: While the community has focused on the supposed negatives, they've tended to miss the obvious. The standard of design throughout is extraordinary, while the 'City' hub is a beautiful addition.*

SPIDER-MAN 2
Reviewed by Korhan Uysal

PCGA 25, Score 53%

I thought I'd better write you a review of this, in case you had any misplaced preconceptions that it was like the console version.

After watching the movie, I went round to my friend who owned a PS2 copy of the game and had an enormous amount of fun hanging random criminals off lamp posts and 'webbing' people between buildings.

The PC version contains none of this. The map is a lot smaller and the places you can visit are limited. There are no criminals wondering the streets, and you only have six different moves. Not even the characters you face are the same. And the game is so easy I completed it one sitting! It took me about an hour and 20 minutes and I didn't die once.

> I had fun hanging criminals from lamp posts

This game has no substance, no real story and no link with the film or the console games. People are going to buy this because it's part of the Spider-Man franchise. Don't. I was lucky; I was able to return it. Swing well clear of this.

Korhan's Rating 28%

"Wah...? They've stolen half the game!"

PCGA *responds: We're still bemused by the debacle. While our console friends are busy swinging through a virtual Manhattan, we're left with a lumpen, under-polished platform game.*

With our supposed undying need for depth, it's not every day that we cop the shallow edition.

JNC

The reader review of the month wins an awesome portable JNC SSF-31 MP3 Player!
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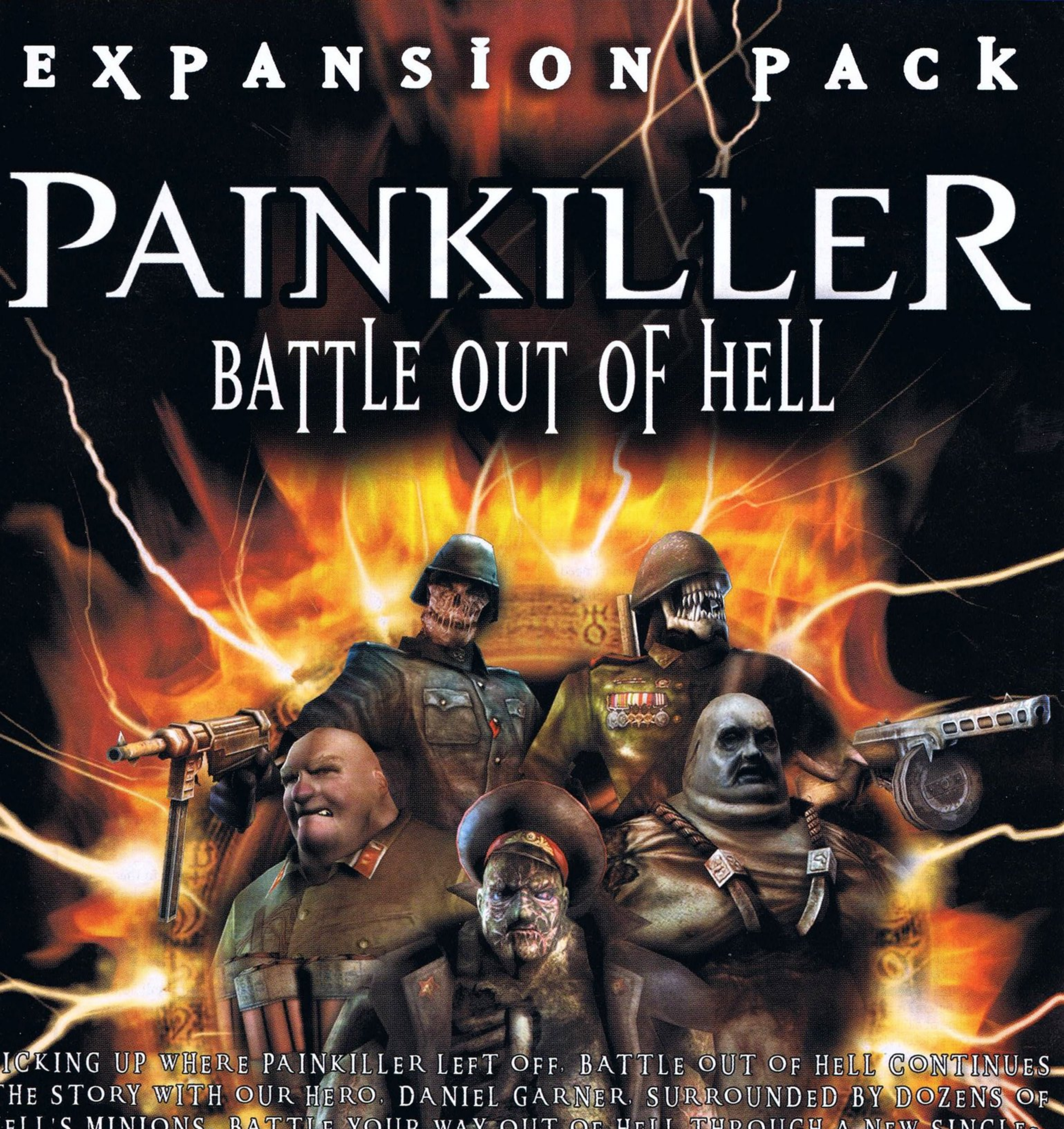
EXPANSION PACK

PAINKILLER

BATTLE OUT OF HELL



PICKING UP WHERE PAINKILLER LEFT OFF, BATTLE OUT OF HELL CONTINUES THE STORY WITH OUR HERO, DANIEL GARNER, SURROUNDED BY DOZENS OF HELL'S MINIONS. BATTLE YOUR WAY OUT OF HELL THROUGH A NEW SINGLE-PLAYER 10-LEVEL CHAPTER AGAINST ALL NEW - AND EVEN MORE DEMONIC - VILLAINS.

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DREAMCATCHER

Cables

Illustrations by **David Lyttleton**

Featuring: Martin's Top 10, er... 5, and budget MMO...

SHORTS

I'm a big AFL fan, and with Acclaim biting the dust, I'm wondering if anyone else will be doing an AFL game in the near future? It'd suck major arse if the games died along with the publisher.
Bomberman, via email

We have to do a wee bit of tongue biting I'm afraid, but there's some good news we can pass on, that being there is a developer working on ensuring that Aussie gamers will be able to indulge in our biggest national sport. It's so well supported, PCGA doubt AFL games will ever truly vanish, just take 'breaks' here and there.

I've heard that *Civ IV* is on the way, and being a turn-based strategy wonk, part of me is quite excited. The rest of me is filled with dread at the thought of tens of hours of busywork building roads and bloody temples. Will the endgame be as bloated as before? Is there any hope at all?
Constrictor, via email

It may well please your troubled, multi-faceted consciousness to learn that Firaxis are planning to strip most of the legacy cruft from the next civ. No more managing the resources of every last map square - or so we're told. In the mean time, keep an eye out for Advance Wars DS. *If it was as addictive as Black Hole Rising, we may never load up* Civ *again...* **PCGA**

The classic MMORPG

Yes, I'm sure many companies ears are burning with a title like this. Unfortunately, none have much to show for it. "Ooooo, a new MMORPG is coming out, quick lets buy it for a ridiculous amount, then pay an even more ridiculous amount for subscription each month". This seems the norm of today, but the thing is it doesn't need to be. Now I know most will say hey, *World of Warcraft* will be one of the best out there, well guess what, your probably right. But let's not forget why I am here. The classics, yes, the ones which have fair to excellent graphics, the ones that have a large and thriving player base, and the ones that are, wait for it, FREE!!! I don't think people realise there are other MMORPG's worthwhile out there, that they can play for nothing. I'm not talking 14 day trials, nor do I mean beta versions. I'm talking about true blue, 8,760 hours of free MMORPG.

Runescape has a huge player base, having (and I've seen it) 25 Free and 12 member worlds, each being able to host 2000 players at one time. Believe me, at peak conditions, nearly every room is maxed out, thats around 60-70 thousand players on at a time. The graphics are fairly good, the gameplay is neverending, and the member subscription of $8 makes it even more tempting to even the most hardcore RPGers. Trust me guys, *World of Warcraft*, *Matrix Online* and *Istaria* may seem like big time MMOG's, but you haven't seen anything until you've tried *Runescape.*
Brendan Fox, via email

Brendan, more gamers should write in with advice for their fellow gamers like you've done here (hint - *Ed). We may not entirely agree, but perhaps that's because we're in the privelaged situation that involves beta accounts for* World of Warcraft *and* Everquest II. *We also don't pay for the privelage either - it is work after all.*

But please readers, share your insights like Brendan, as sometimes the best gaming experiences aren't marketed properly to reach their potential, even if they're worth shouting out to the world.
PCGA

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Influence their growth

My top ten (*five* – Ed) most wanted:

Sims: The Matrix

Play as Theo, a regular bloke building a life for himself in a popular EA life-simulating game who suspects that his every move is being controlled by some higher power.

Civ 4: The Illuminati

Be the all-powerful Illuminati, steering civilisation from behind the scenes. The cities are already there; you have to 'influence' their growth and formation, the choice of wars, governments, alliances and technology through money, personal contact and control of information. Take over the world, but without anyone ever knowing...

TeaLeaf: The Shadows

Play as Gareth, Leytonstone's not-quite-finest as he steals from the rich, poor and in-between in an attempt not to save the world, but enough cash for that dream house in Marbella, with the pool, right next to the shop selling English breakfast 24 hours a day.

Bad-guys revenge

Be Billy Adams and laugh as you finish off Alex Denton in the embryonic chamber and then moon JC as he realises he's a human Popsicle for the rest of his life. Other baddies to play as include Mental, the Black Knight, Walter Simmons and that bloke from the end of *Kingpin.*

World War 1 RTS

No resource management, no strategy, no tactics required! 50,000 troops on screen at any one time! Group-select your entire army, point them at the enemy machinegun nests, and then sit back and watch. Repeat until revolution. For added player bonuses search no-man's land for special power-ups that grant your troops new weapons including mortars, aircraft, gas attacks and tanks. None of which have any impact on the result of the battle whatsoever. (*Snip* – Ed)
Martin Gollogly via email

That's not quite what we meant when we said 'Your top 10'. But wait a second! That Civ 4 *idea's not bad. Perhaps you should email Sid Meier before we pretend we thought of it.* **PCGA**

ATARI

The best letter of the month wins a bundle of great games from Atari's 'Heroes' range. Send your rants, ravings and reactions to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** with "CABLES" as the subject. Long or vulgar letters may be edited to fit or toned down accordingly...

LONDON STUDIO

TEAM SOHO

MA 15+

The Getaway Black Monday

Exclusive to PlayStation.2

PEST CONTROL

Step into the underworld. www.blackmonday.com.au

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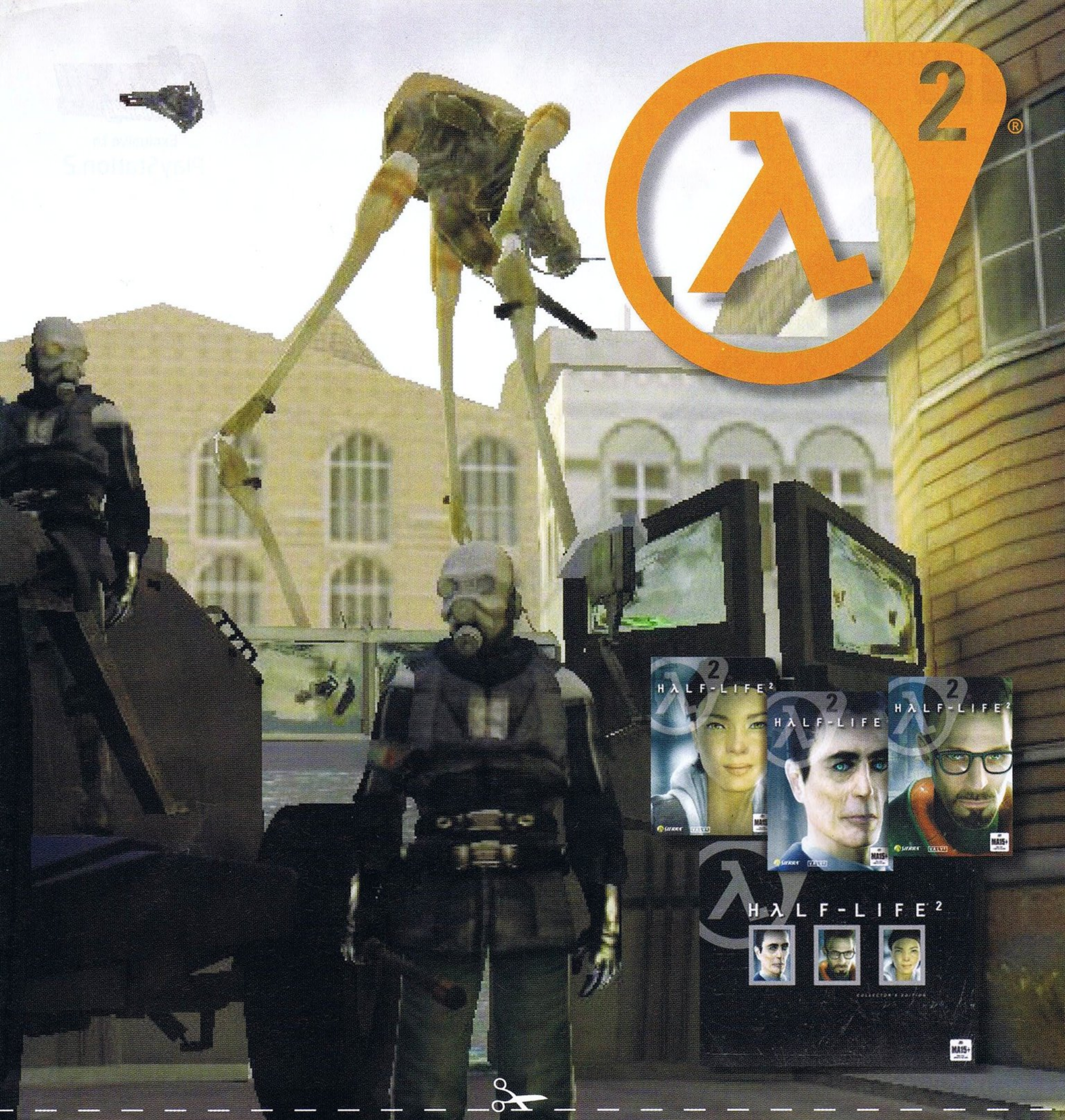

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PC GAMES ADDICT

REVIEWS

In which we put the new releases before our panel of PC gaming experts

Incoming!

Like swarming Zeros there's simply too many of them

It's really quite distressing when there's more games landing on the **PCGA** doorstep than you can farm out to the slaves in the review pit. Why distressing? Because we refuse to give a good game a pitiful amount of coverage in an effort to make space for games people don't care about. If it's at all confusing as to why that's distressing, just take a look at all this gaming gold that's been obscured by *Half-Life 2's* far-reaching shadow.

Firstly, nearly every PC gamer out there is about to buy *Half-Life 2*. Only the devoted or the loaded can really afford to buy even half the good games between now and year's end.

There's titles reviewed in this issue that really deserve far more attention than Gordon's return will allow for. *Pirates! Rollercoaster Tycoon 3, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, Pacific Fighters* and *Tribes: Vengeance* are all more than worth a look, they're very good games. *Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault* has also wound up far from shabby, but the genre the original *MOH* game gave birth to has since inspired games that actually upped the ante a bit. Gamers haven't had cause to pine away for the next *MOH*, simply because there's been other WWII shooters since, many of which have been better in ways.

But the competition's on all fronts for *MOH:PA*, and not just other WWII games like the recent *United Offensive* and the upcoming *Brothers in Arms*. Surrounding the veteran is a Spanish War Galleon, a man in a panda-suit, a jet-pack toting space marines, and a squad of terrorists, all of which will make standing out right now a truly daunting task.

DAN TOOSE
EDITOR

Scrutinised this issue...

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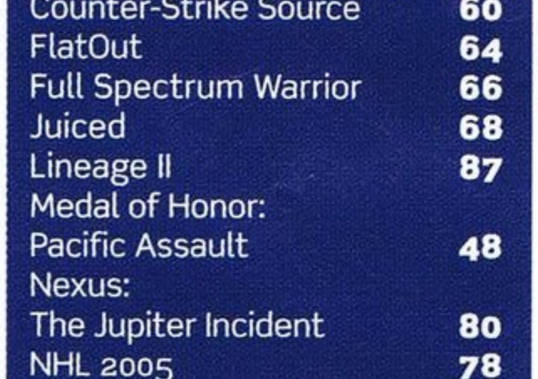
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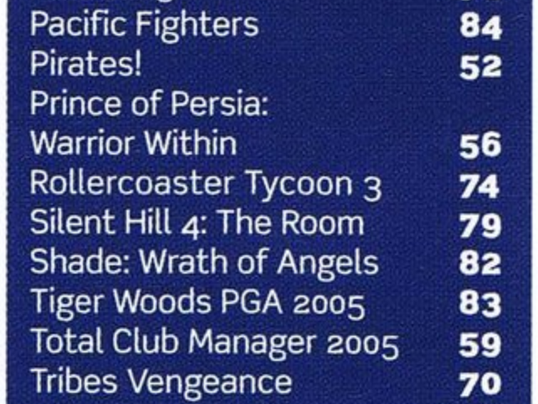
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The PCGA review rig

There's no point reviewing new games on old PCs, otherwise we wouldn't be doing them justice. After all, how can you tell how well a game runs until you've seen it on the best machine available?

That's why we've turned to Emagen. Not just because they're able to keep working with an up to date PC to put the games through their paces, but also due to the fact that we're certain that they do the best system assembly in the business. Look at the picture below and you won't find a stray ATA cable or screw out of place. If you're serious about assembling the best machine you can, you'd do well to contact Emagen.

THE PC GAMES ADDICT REVIEW MACHINE:

- AMD Athlon XP 3000+
- Asus A7N8X Deluxe
- Corsair TWINX 512MB PC3200
- 128MB Radeon 9800 Pro
- 19" Mitsubishi Flat CRT Monitor
- Western Digital WD800JB HDD
- 16X DVD, 52x24x52 CDRW
- Antec LanBoy Chassis
- Mitsubishi 104Key Black Keyboard
- Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

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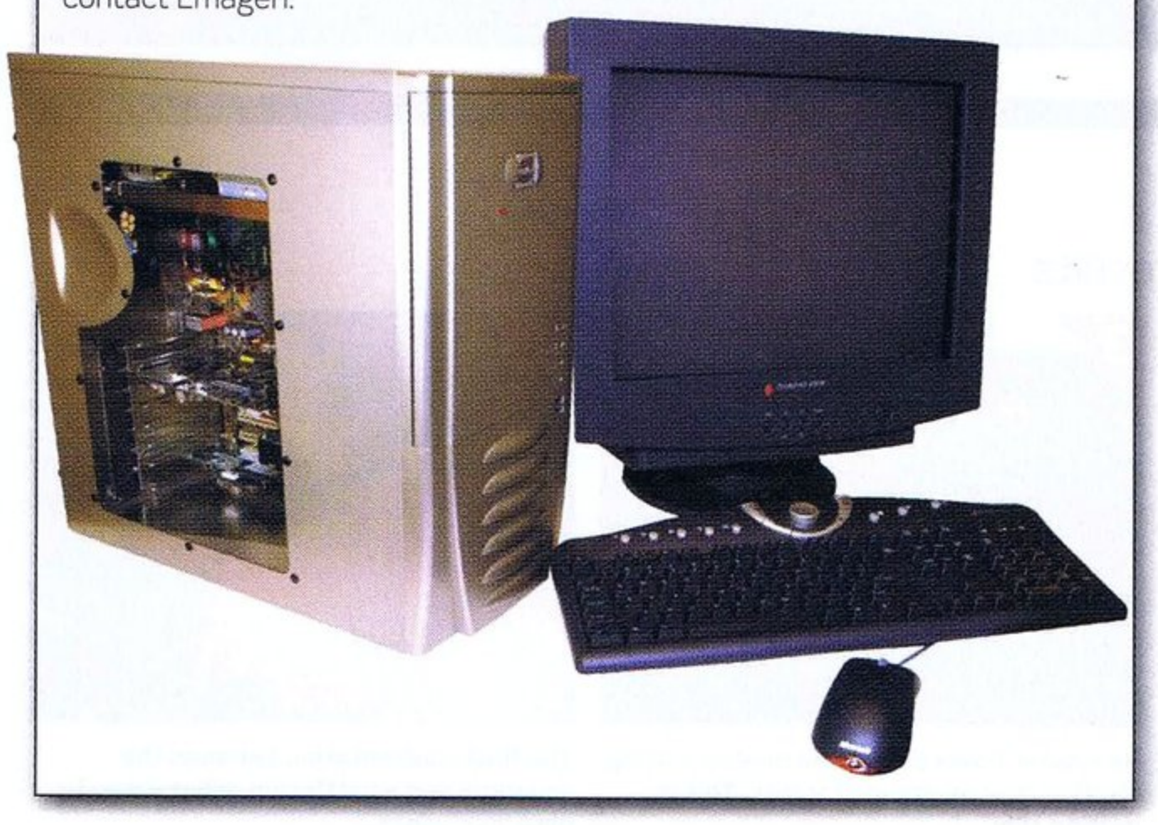


Our Scoring System Explained

0-19% ABOMINABLE
Game crime. If you see this game do not approach. Call the appropriate authorities and have it removed.

20-49% POOR
A deeply troubled and troubling effort. Think twice, even if you find it lurking in the bargain bin.

50-69% MEDIOCRE
Fans of the theme or genre can extract limited fun if they persevere. Otherwise, put your wallet away.

70-84% GOOD
Consistently enjoyable but lacks that spark of genius. Superior alternatives are usually available.

85-89% EXCELLENT
A first-class title that guarantees great gaming. Fans of the genre will revel in it.

90%+ EXCEPTIONAL
Instant classic. These games are worth trying even if you don't normally like the genre.

THE PCGA AWARD

Just as our scoring system implies, if it gets 85% or higher, it's a game worthy of your hard earned dollar. Our **GOLD GAME** award willhelp you spot games **PCGA** recommend.

PC GAMES GOLD GAME

RIGHT TO REPLY

Think we've treated a game unfairly? Or perhaps we've gone too easy on a game. Address your redress to **pcga@derwenthoward.com.au** or write to us via snail mail by sending your correspondence to **Feedback, PC Games Addict, Derwent Howard, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355**

MEDAL OF HONOUR PACIFIC ASSAULT

Paradise lost? Have you looked down the back of the sofa?

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Thumbnail Review

Take a trip to the Pacific Islands and stain the white sand

- [x] Crush
- [x] Kill
- [x] Destroy
- [x] Sunbathe

Idyllic settings make the best killing fields. Repel the Japanese from the islands using cunning, skill and WMDs.

Only one word can describe the start: Wow.

FLY, MY PRETTY

Take to the air

Tommy flies like a bird for the first time, with interesting results

He's merely a passenger, smiting the planes in the sky around him with the bullets of (the West's) God

Pilot down! It's time to take control of the plane during a fast and frenetic dogfight with the Japanese.

He's never flown before and now he's doing strafing runs on ground targets. This is getting silly.

The final confrontation between the squadron and a battleship. What a way to earn your wings...

Honestly – it just went off in my hands.

Wasabi and airline toilets don't mix well.

A typical *Medal of Honour* scene. Lots of enemies running around.

December 7, 1941. Hawaii. There's a war going on, but you don't expect the devil to make an appearance. Not in Paradise. Not on a Sunday. But sure enough… planes. Hundreds of them. They fill the sky, spew lead like hail and tear the American Navy a new one. They're the common thread running through all the best bits of EA's assault on the Pacific and with every set-piece you're reminded just what your newest recruit could have been.

Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault is the tale of rookie Tom Conlin whose tour of duty begins with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and ends with the reclamation of the island of Tarawa. In between these two behemoth missions, Tom and his squad fight through the Japanese-occupied Pacific Islands. It's like a package holiday with ambushes. It's also a huge change of setting for the series, previously confined to the crumbled cities of WWII Europe. Gone are the solid walls, obvious hiding places and straight roads, and in their place you'll find trees, wooden shacks and more hidey holes than a Japanese capsule hotel.

Intriguingly, the game begins at the end with a brief glimpse of the final level. Tommy's breathless run for cover after a disastrous boat landing at Tarawa. You're given a short burst of action – and one that you can't win – before being flash-backed two years to the real opening level – Pearl Harbour. Another breathless run: this time along wooden decking as Japanese planes scream low enough for you to make out the meatballs on the wings. Bullets ping, engines "grrrrr" and you're left with a gun and a whole lot of running to do. Timing is everything here. The relative safety of the cover buildings and crates provide must be weighed against the knowledge that an accurate shot from your rifle can pick planes out of the sky if you stand and fight. If you can resist the temptation, you're a better man than I. I spent a good ten minutes following planes with my crosshairs, hitting the sweetspot and laughing as they tumbled out of control. It's a glorious opening.

It's like a package holiday with ambushes

The whole of Pearl Harbour, aside from a brief interlude inside a battleship, follows the same theme: firing from a boat as the planes bomb and torpedo the fleet and taking up the fitted guns bolted to the battleships while planes drop chunks of shrapnel from the sky.

It's a sequence that wears its scripting on its sleeve and funnels you through a minutely planned sequence of events, but it's so damned cool it doesn't matter.

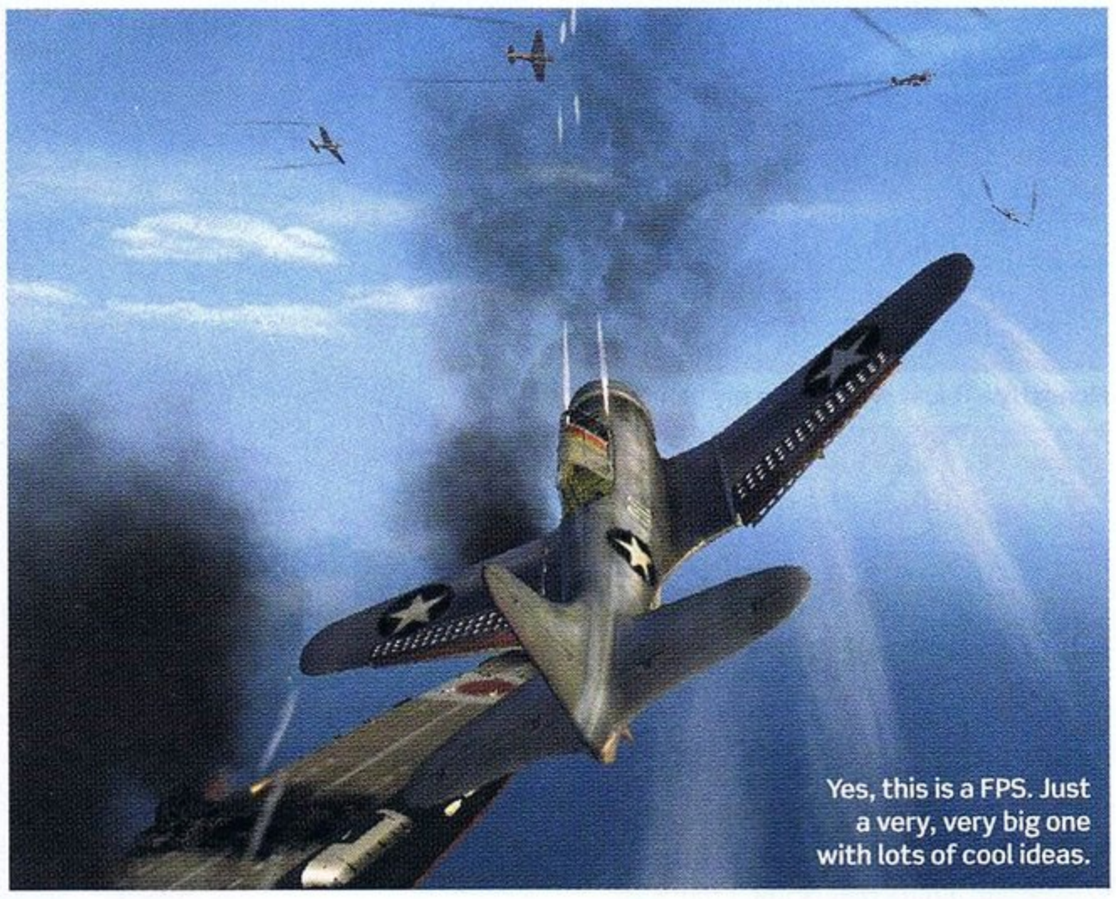
During the run in the PT boat, one plane gets picked out of the sky and comes barrelling into your boat leaving nothing but flaming vapour. Restart and it'll happen again. And again.

The Japanese fighters drop torpedoes into the water that slam into a battleship forcing it to slowly tip over as your boat runs alongside – no matter how many times you replay it, the pure cinematic joy of watching the deck slip under the water and the hull flip over is genuinely stirring. It's a rousing opening sequence and, frankly, as with *Allied Assault*, it's the best part of the game.

If by now you're thinking this doesn't sound much like a FPS, then you're right. The best bits of the game are when you're not following *MoH*'s patented ▶

MEDAL OF HONOUR: PACIFIC ASSAULT

De plane, boss: the view from the deck as the Japanese attack.



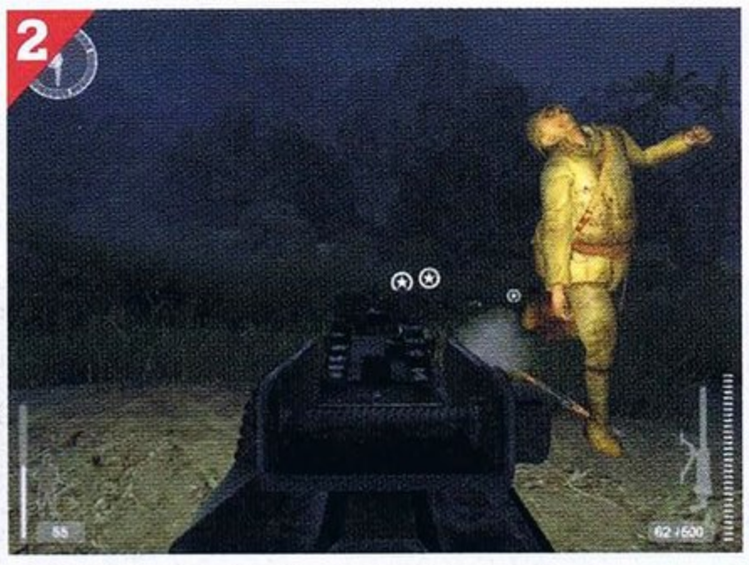
Yes, this is a FPS. Just a very, very big one with lots of cool ideas.

POPCORN

Make set-piece, not war

When movies and war collide the spectacle is more than a little crowd-pleasing

Inside a wrecked battleship, armed only with an axe, Tommy comes across an acetylene tank. A door blocks his path so you do what any Arnie wannabe would – whack the valve to ignite the gas and send the tank through the door.



Bloody ridge. Starts off quiet but then you hear a scream in the distance. Then another. Suddenly, it's like Pearl Harbour but with armed men rather than bullets. Watch out, though – those guns can run out of ammo...

You've fought past a mounted gun and through enemy-filled trenches. What could possibly be waiting for you now? How about a Howizter and four tanks that sound like they need oiling. This is a blast in the most literal sense.

run-them-down-a-linear-level-style of action. That's not to say it's a bad FPS: this is the best jungle-based shooter out there. It's just that doesn't put it in the *Half-Life 2* league. The drama of the FPS sections never quite recaptures the joy of the opening. It's a testament to the developers that they managed to make the notoriously difficult jungle setting work at all. Games where gunshots rip through leaves have fallen flat many times; the balance is always tipped in favour of the enemy. Neatly, *Pacific Assault*'s use of sound and muzzle-flash gives you enough clues to get a bead on the hidden foe, and if you can't locate them, just follow your comrades' lead.

The romp through the sweatbox jungles of the Pacific makes up most of the experience. It's a different prospect from the previous games. Twitchier. There are no one-on-one encounters, just mobs of enemies, some in wooden camps, others in the naked jungle, waiting for your arrival and ready to swarm. These fights usually kick off with a massive charge. The Japanese soldiers are brave, handy with a bayonet and have unerring accuracy with pineapples. They're not perfect, though, with more than a touch of the kamikaze about their tactics if you get close enough. They also know how to move to flank you; and the first you'll know is when they've speared your kidneys or when you hear a warning from your squad.

> Your band is worth its weight in hot lead

Oh, yes – your squad. This time you've got constant companions: a group of fighters who patrol with you through the jungle. All you can ask of team AI is that they're dependable, and in this respect your band of brothers are worth their weight in hot lead. The group of soldiers lay down covering fire, toss grenades and call out accurate warnings. They also lead you to the next section when you get lost. There are no heroics in this theatre of war because the team precludes any need for them. Hell, even in the scripted scenes they take their place, mounting .50 cals and defending positions.

That's not to say they're to be relied upon to do your job – you're still the main strike force, and should kill more than they do. But when you're ambushed you'll thank Thor the squad's there to take up the strain. Particularly the Corpsman. He's the man you call when you're riddled full of bullets. There are no health pick-ups, instead you have to bandage yourself when injured enough to bleed. Then call in the medic to boost your strength. If one of your squaddies ends up like Swiss cheese then you must try to collect the body and cover the medic as he works.

One of the developments *Pacific Assault* brings to the series is group command. At certain points in the fighting, decisions need to be made, using a simple system of orders. Do you drag the squad forward into battle, tell them to fall back, order covering fire or rally on your position? The system can be tricky to learn, because it's not consistently available, and when there's a Japanese soldier happily bayoneting your belly, you may have other things to focus on. It's usually the case that you'll use the team to support your own actions, before you head off into the woods like a bimbo in a horror movie.

And so, deeper into the jungle we head. There's an obvious pattern to the fighting. You're forced down slim pathways that

TAKEN APART

"Do you get my point?"

FEEL THE PAIN It's a good idea to keep the Japanese soldiers as far away as possible. In melee attacks, their bayonet charges take chunks out of your health with alarming ease. Keep cool and aim for the head. Be prepared to follow-up with another shot: a lot of the time the first headshot will only remove their helmet.
SQUAD THRUST The two command options here are 'fall back' and 'fire'. Depending on the situation, you've got certain choices to make. You can do nothing as your squad is perfectly capable of carrying on autonomously, but nothing beats a well-executed plan of attack.
GET THE TAGS That exclamation mark and the curled up foetal position mean this guy's in trouble. If the Corpsman is occupied (his position is marked with a cross on the radar) then it's your duty to make sure the downed squaddie is rescued and taken to the medic.
50
30 / 100

widen into clumps of enemies. You fight them en masse, then move on to the next clump. There are few alternative routes to pick out and when you do find them, they're little more than shortcuts. There's no strategic planning necessary – the Japanese soldiers are just up ahead and you have to kill them. And they know instinctively where you are. No matter if you're sneaking through thick trees, or behind walls, unless your fanatical foe is forced to deal with one of your squad, they'll always turn to you.

It's solid action, but lacks imagination when compared to the bigger set-pieces. Cleaning out an unremarkable village of prescient soldiers just can't compare to the night of Bloody Ridge, where you take up a mounted gun. The night starts humming with voices. Beginning quietly but building into a crescendo as the enemy charges headfirst into your encampment, screaming bloody murder. All the while your trenchmate shouts directions as you focus hot death into the deadly mass. Sweet.

Perhaps the on-foot sections would click together better if they were bigger. Loading scenes pop-up with alarming regularity, making it feel like a series of vignettes rather than a coherent experience. You'd also think, that since *Allied Assault*, the developers would have figured out a way to stop guns poking through walls, or prevent AI soldiers running into solid objects. They haven't. The much whooped-up physics also add little beyond windows that swing on hinges and some shaky barrels.

But the grumbles with *Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault* are focused on the minutiae. This new instalment addresses some of the problems of the previous titles but there are still some gameplay kinks to be worked out.

The bigger picture is rather more entertaining. It may not have the same immediate impact as its predecessor, but in a genre where developers often manage to up the ante, simply remaining competitive is a victory in this day and age.

CRAIG PEARSON

PC GAMES ADDICT Fun in the sun

IT'S › Fun › Big › Stylish

IT'S NOT › Original › Chilly › A step forward

Parcific

85%

■ **Release** November 12 ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, online ■ **Link** www.eagames.com/official/moh/pacificassault/us/home.jsp ■ **Influenced by** Medal of Honour: Allied Assault, The Mighty Beard ■ **Alternatively** Call of Duty

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Thumbnail Review

Sail the Spanish Main to pursue your wildest dreams of...

- ☑ Wealth
- ☑ Fame
- ☑ Romance and

what follows...

- ☒ Getting scurvy

A non-linear, devil-may-care romp through an age of adventure and criminal capers!

SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

No, the creator of Civ is not a crime boss.

It was 1987, and in reality, even though I lived on the shores of Lake Macquarie, and fifteen minutes from the beach, I was no more of a seafarer than the average Tibetan. I was, however, a swashbuckling menace of the Spanish Main, thanks to a vivid imagination, and the fine work of Sid Meier – I was a C64 *Pirates!* junkie. At the time I didn't think much about the game design, because like many others, I was too hooked to bother contemplating it, but Sid delivered one of the first great non-linear action-adventure games. *Pirates*! has featured on countless 'Best Game' lists and received countless awards, so how do Sid and Firaxis go about giving us a twenty-first century edition?

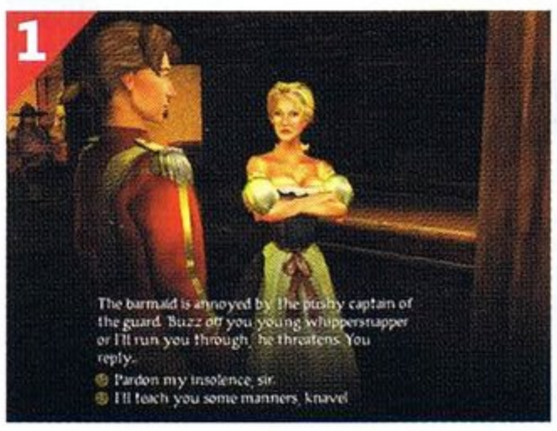
Well, the core gameplay and story remain unchanged –You are the only member of a European merchant family to escape brutal betrayal at the hands of a malevolent Marquis, separating you from everything and everyone you have known. Your family have been taken to the New World! You sign up as a crew member on a ship to gain passage to the Spanish Main, under the command of a mad and merciless captain. Naturally, it ends in mutiny, whereby you seize control of the ship and start out on a quest to organise a family reunion, the dashing way. Or do you? *Pirates!* is a game of choice, and the Spanish Main was a place that provided amazing avenues for the ambitious. Europe was sucking the Americas dry of riches, while also establishing a foothold in this new paradise. Whether as a pioneer, militant, middleman, or thief, there was many ways to get ahead in this part of the world.

Despite neither having much in the way of genuine character interaction via dialogue, nor a story with that much genuine intrigue, *Pirates!* is an adventure

PUB RULES

"For her honour!"

Or more realistically, a great excuse for a pub brawl...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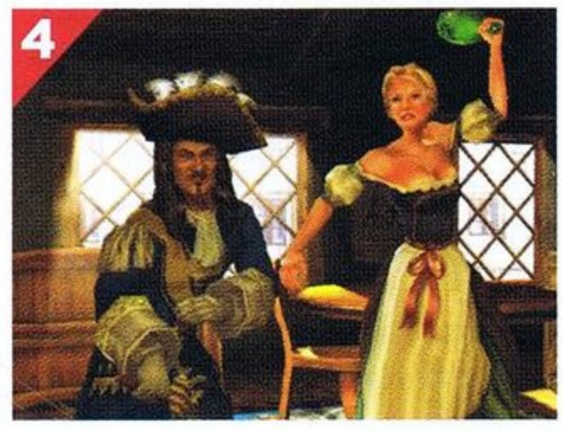
The barmaid is annoyed by the pushy captain of the guard. 'Buzz off you young whippersnapper or I'll run you through,' he threatens. You reply...
Pardon my insolence, sir.
I'll teach you some manners, knave!

"What's that m'lady? Some swine has offended you? He made a joke about my shoulder tassles? Right! That's it!"

Wasting no time in trashing the joint, our hero runs up to the mezzanine level, so he can promptly kick said swine off of it.

Shaken, not stirred, our adversary stands to fight, but it's not our hero that the rude captain has to worry about...



Alcohol is the real killer here folks, but that's probably just because it's in the hands of a belligerent, busty blonde.

"Sea for yourself..."

JOLLY ROGER! You're not the only menace of the Main, and now that we look closely through our spyglass that gives a view to the horizon, we can see the skull and crossbones of a more notorious pirate captain than yourself. Yipes!
LITTLE BATTLER That sloop may be the smallest ship in your fleet, but it may be the best in the next battle due to its superior handling in poor winds.
ROCK THE BOAT Well, this isn't the way you want to do it. If you're daft enough to sail over rocks or directly into storms, you're going to find out why the hard way.
GOLDEN GOALS The Spanish Main is a big place, and you'll never have a hope of remembering where everything is. Fortunately, these icons serve as shortcuts to maps that show where treasure and important people can be found.
Fame
7600
2 months
175 crew
4 knots
Bonampak
Friendly Indian Village
Thunder Stone
Shark Point
7 PAUSE
Furl Sails
9 Change View
4 Turn Left
5 Attack!
6 Turn Right
Fleet Status
2 Reefed Sails
Map
ebruary 7, 1661

game first and foremost. It also has some RPG-style elements; it's just that the player uses action and rather simplistic strategies to develop their character. That's not to say that *Pirates!* is a game where the player can't influence or affect the world, because that's so not true – quite the opposite, more so than ever before. The Spanish Main is a living, breathing place that can change in a heartbeat.

With the Caribbean being occupied by scattered Indian tribes and the four European powers of England, Spain, France and Holland, there are numerous powers to work for and against, and that's what privateering is all about. As a pirate, you raise your capital and resources via plunder, from both ships and settlements. Taking either of these will upset one faction, but make one or more of the others pleased with you. This scenario faces the player right from the outset. It poses questions… Which country should I work with? Who will my enemies be? Where will I get my crew? How many crew members do I need? Where is that evil Spanish baron who knows where my sister is? Will the Governor of Trinidad's beautiful daughter be into my dance floor antics?

In practice, playing *Pirates!* means cruising the Caribbean waters via an exaggerated, yet beautiful 3D view, visiting ports, battling at sea, plundering towns or marching inland for buried treasures – but mostly the first three. Even though the game allows the player to pursue whichever goal they desire, there are some basic rules to follow to realise those ambitions.

There are numerous powers to work for...

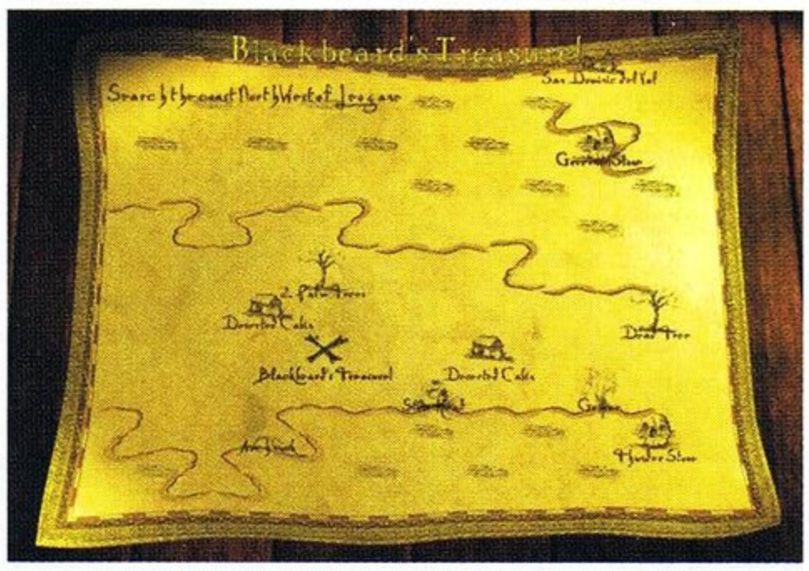
Number one, if you want to go for big, well guarded targets, you're going to need a big crew. Of course, the kind of men who join pirate crews willingly are in it for the loot, so that immediately means that plunder isn't just the way to get ahead, it's essential to keep your company afloat so to speak. Idle hands on a pirate ship make for mutinous minds and deserters.

Secondly, because a lot of the plunder comes as food, luxuries, goods, sugar, spices and cannons, the player needs two things – enough ships (cargo space) to carry it all, and a place to sell it. You need to think about where you're going to get loot, and where you can offload it… The next Spanish town won't welcome you if their compatriots along the coast were your latest victims.

Thirdly, what do you want? If you want to find a family member, quest for buried treasure, seek a certain item or hunt down a certain foe, do you have the time? Will the tip-off from a yellow-bellied captured officer get to race to Port Royale to catch the evil Spanish Count? Even though you can do whatever you want, *Pirates!* is a game where you age, and battle wounds can grow old with you. You can't ▶

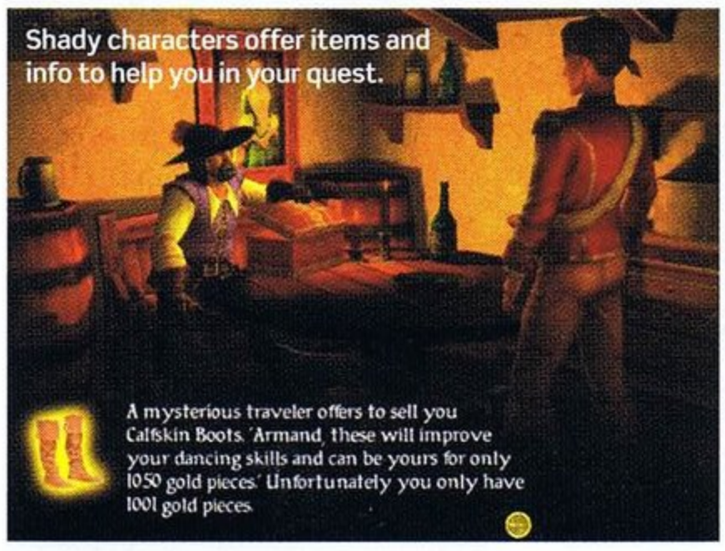
SID MEIER'S PIRATES

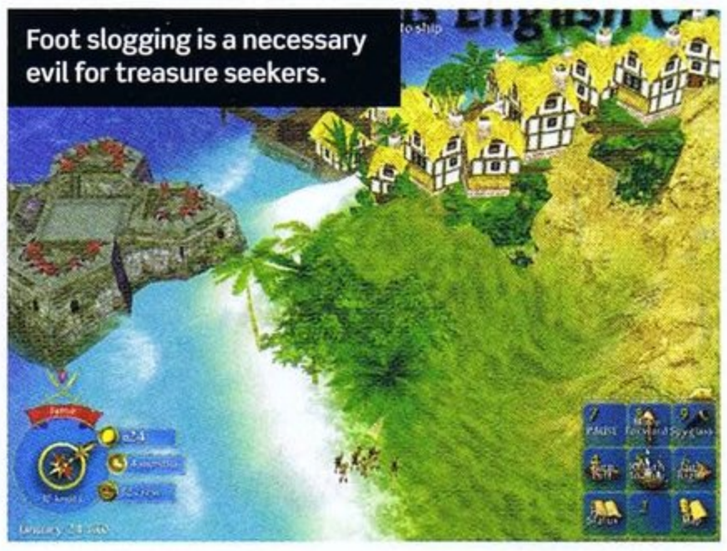
A few volleys like that and she'll soon be striking her colours!

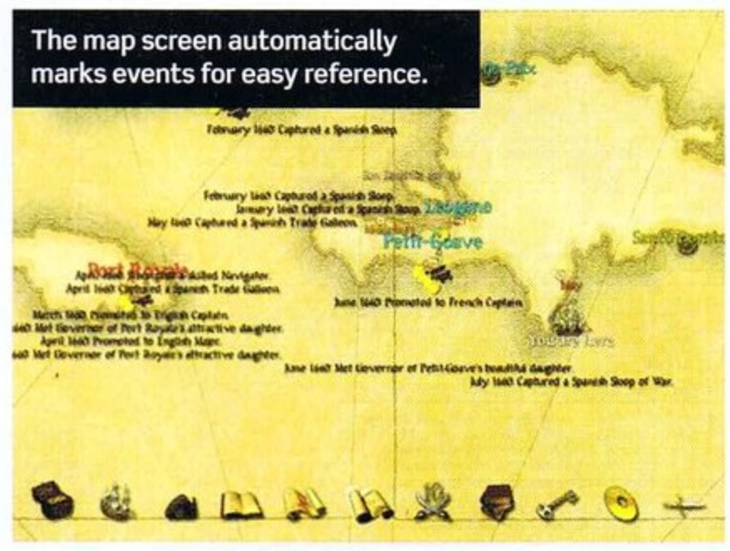


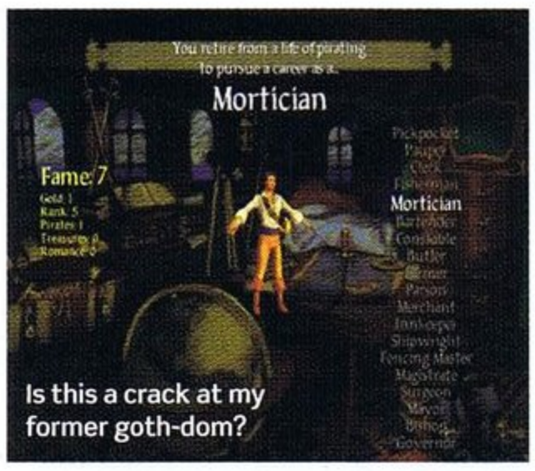
Blackbeard's treasure! Take it, and you're a marked man.

'Revenge'
Sloop (40 tons)
Chain Shot
Grape Shot
The shipwright offers to upgrade your ship with Triple Hammocks (carry more crew).
Repair
54 gold
Upgrade: Triple Hammocks
500 gold
Go To Next Ship
You have 624 gold and room for 6 tons of cargo.
Shipwrights can repair and upgrade your fleet in different ways.

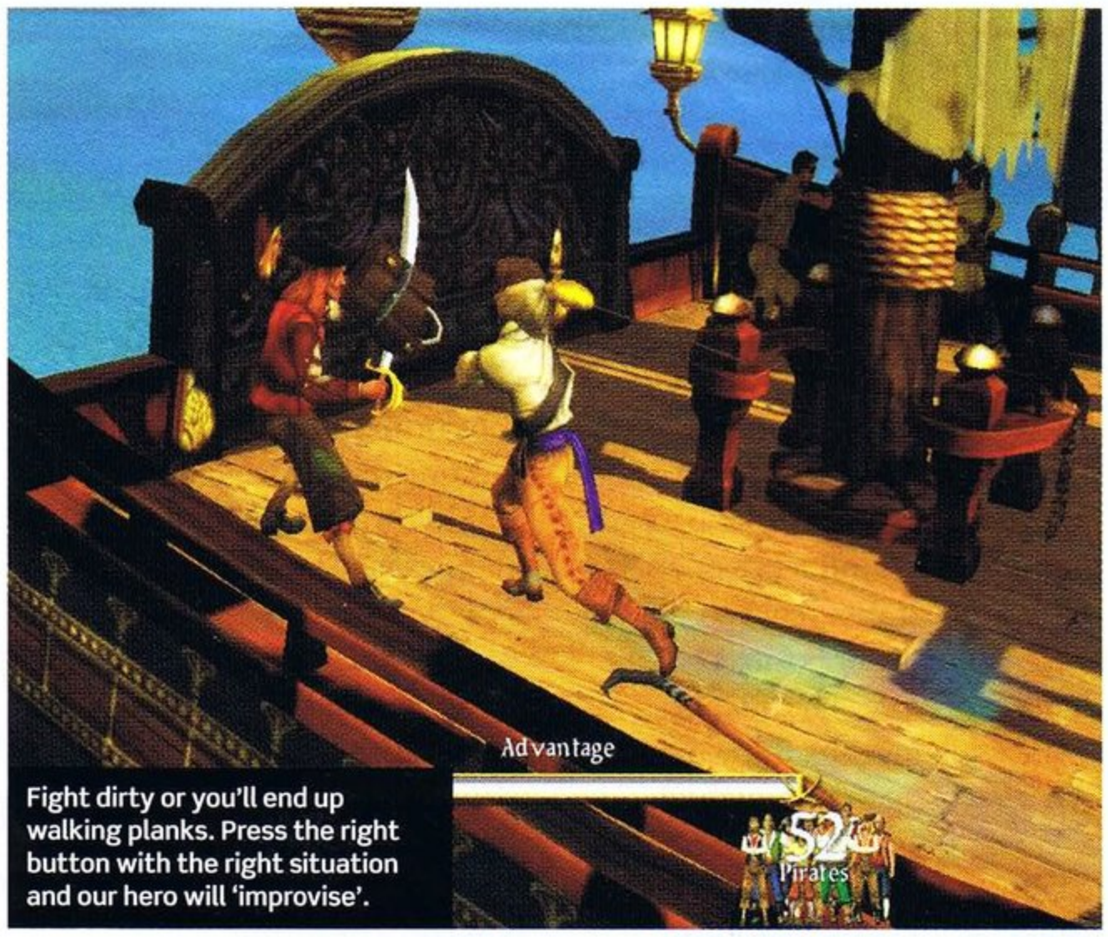

A mysterious traveler offers to sell you Calfskin Boots. 'Armand, these will improve your dancing skills and can be yours for only 1050 gold pieces.' Unfortunately you only have 1001 gold pieces.
Shady characters offer items and info to help you in your quest.


Foot slogging is a necessary evil for treasure seekers.


February 1660 Captured a Spanish Sloop
January 1660 Captured a Spanish Sloop
May 1660 Captured a Spanish Trade Galleon
Port Royale
Petit-Goave
April 1660 Captured a Spanish Trade Galleon
June 1660 Promoted to French Captain
July 1660 Captured a Spanish Sloop of War
The map screen automatically marks events for easy reference.



Is this a crack at my former goth-dom?



Fight dirty or you'll end up walking planks. Press the right button with the right situation and our hero will 'improvise'.

expect to find your massive (probably Catholic) family of 16 members, woo the most beautiful woman of the Spanish Main, rise to high society in the eyes of all four European powers and become the most notorious pirate of the seas all in the one lifetime… That's a bold ambition.

This last limiting factor is what makes *Pirates!* such a joy to play again and again. Within the first game, it becomes quite obvious to the player they'll never do it all the first time around, and quite possibly never all in one go. Thus it's a game that encourages replay, which works because *Pirates!* is essentially a collection of great mini-games. There's sailing/trading, naval battles (ship vs. ship), melee battles (crew vs. enemy), assaulting towns, sneaking in/out of towns and dancing with eligible daughters of the Governors.

It's not just a case of mastering a few simple mini-games, though, as the player has ability levels and each career starts with the player choosing a specialty: fencing, gunnery, medicine (for a long life), navigation and charm, to ply on the ladies of course. You don't need to be great at navigation or gunnery if you're a master fencer, capable of taking out an enemy captain to break his crew's will to fight. However, too many nicks and cuts from being too battle-ready can, and will, shorten your glorious adventures. Perhaps simply being built to last a few more years or sail faster will serve you better in the long run.

This is where I must warn PC gamers that did not game in the '80s and early '90s that the depth in this game lies in the choice, and how much the player tries to push the different envelopes of each swashbuckling life they lead. I say this because for those of that crave complexity, they will find the overly simplistic controls limit what they can get out of some of the 'action' sequences. Fencing duels break down to simply timing when to strike high, thrust, swipe low, parry, duck or jump. Players can train with masters to increase the speed and power of certain moves, but this

WOOING AWAY

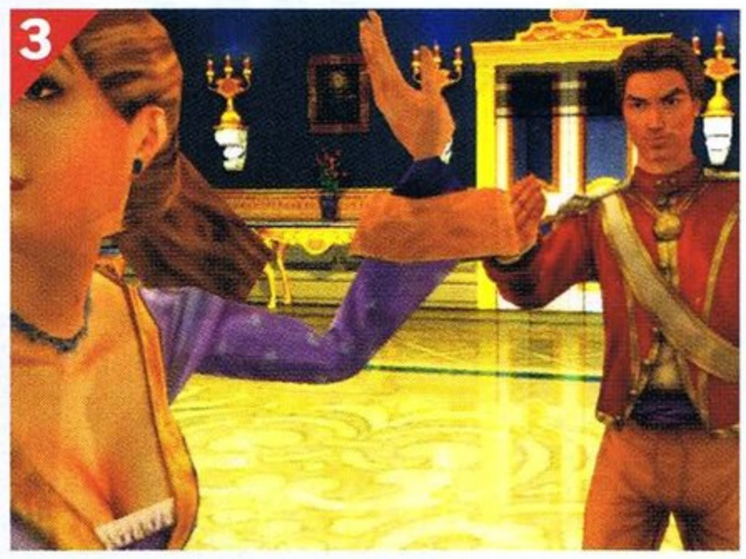
Ladies love a guy who can dance...

No matter how rich, charming or handsome you are, if you've got two left feet, you're staying single.

1
The governor's rather plain daughter enters the room, she seems quite taken with you and invites you to this evening's grand ball. Do you-
Accept her invitation.
Beat a hasty retreat.

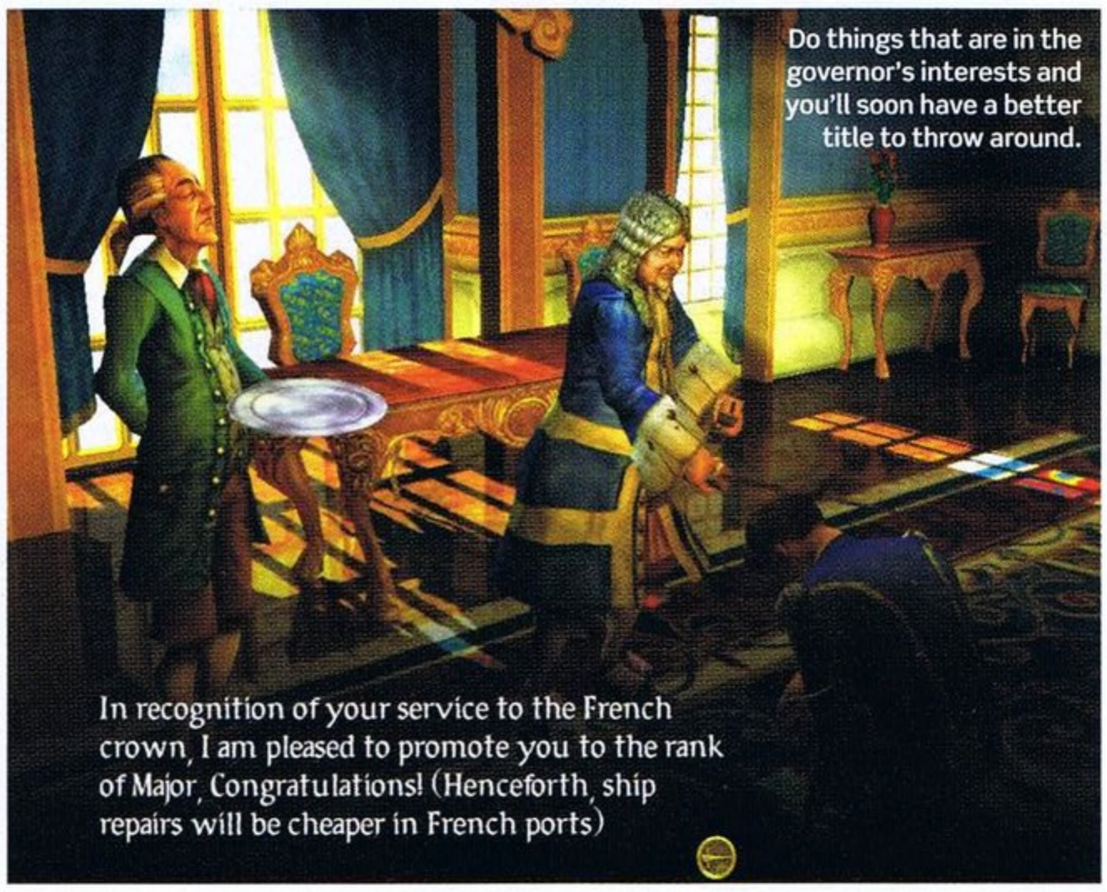
Having just captured an entourage of Spanish vessels, the French governor promptly introduces our hero to his daughter, but she's rather plain... Erk! Thus, he swiftly takes his leave so he can go impress some other governor with a more comely child to have his way with.

Success! We find an English babe in the next town, and she's keen as mustard. She invites our swashbuckler to the grand ball, where she will lead our scoundrel through a long, involved dance. Nail those steps and the heart meter swells with the relative desire of our leading lady...



Or should we say, lack thereof. Our hero just wasn't as graceful on the floor as he is with a rapier. Sure, you can return and try again, but don't take too long... If the town changes owners, she'll be gone, and all that time you spent impressing her and her father will be for naught!

Some ships come with escorts, so the big plunder isn't so easy.


Do things that are in the governor's interests and you'll soon have a better title to throw around.
In recognition of your service to the French crown, I am pleased to promote you to the rank of Major. Congratulations! (Henceforth, ship repairs will be cheaper in French ports)

isn't *Soul Calibur 2*, and twitch gamers may find this a challenge-killer if they exploit this to achieve all their goals.

However, *Pirates!* has been honoured by countless media outlets over the years because it was addictive, charming and fun, and the Firaxis facelift hasn't hurt one bit. Not even pretending to strive for realism, the graphics work around a bold, colourful, cartoon-like styling, that keep the mood merry as you plunder, kill and all that piratey guff.

Music plays in the national style of the faction that rules the the towns as you approach them, and people converse in humorous gibberish pseudo-speak (plenty of 'Arrrh!' noises), all adding ambience and sense of humour already established by the wonderfully hammy animations. Whether it's having the barmaid smash a bottle over your foe's head in a tavern duel or the way the governor and his daughter recoil in offense as you knock her back for a dance.

Although the old formula shines through, Firaxis have made some minor tweaks that make all the difference. Ships can be extensively upgraded by shipwrights, from the hull, to alternate canons, better sails and even extra bedding. There's also a whole collection of special personal items to aid our privateer in all manner of ways. From a better spyglass to spot distant prey with, through to the tools to finish them off, like better swords, armour, and even dancing shoes. You can also find masters to help you work on all your skills, combat and otherwise.

You're not the only antagonist in the Caribbean

The biggest improvement lies in how the player can influence the power struglles of the entire Spanish Main. You're not the only antagonist in the Caribbean, towns are commonly raided and sacked, and you can see it going on around you. You'll scream if those Indians wind up taking the Spanish treasure fleet in that town you randomly sent them to. Of course, those Indians won't be happy if you sent them to certain death. It works both ways.

Potentially lost in a sea of over-hyped big releases that use the latest rendering technologies to forcibly capture the attention of avid gamers, *Pirates!* is a game that's well worth whacking on the wish list. Maybe not at the very top with games like *Half-Life 2* arriving at the same time, but this is the kind of game that will sit on hard drives a long time because it's so easy and inviting to revisit.

Pirates! is just as much of a classic today as it was seventeen years ago, and the folks at Firaxis have done an amazing job of ensuring it's not just a novelty for those who remember the original.

DAN TOOSE

PC GAMES ADDICT An old classic, beautifully restored

IT'S › Swashbuckling fun › Replayable › A revamped classic

IT'S NOT › Complicated › To be missed › A twitch challenge

Bootyful

91%

■ **Release** 26 November ■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Firaxis ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 9.0bDX 3D card ■ **We say** 1.8GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.pirates-game.com ■ **Community** www.piratesahoy.net ■ **Influenced by** The original C64 classic ■ **Alternatively** Port Royale 2

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: WARRIOR WITHIN

The fresh Prince makes a second shot at a comeback

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Thumbnail Review

Time-warping, platform jumping action on an isle of

- ☑ Slay the undead
- ☑ Rock out to metal
- ☑ Angst out to Darkness
- ☒ Impress Germaine Greer

The much-loved late 80s side-scrolling gem is right at home in 3D. High specs and a learning curve, but princely fun.

Wielding double weapons is the cue for some gory *Mortal Kombat* style finishing moves.

It's easy to imagine how they pitched the *Prince of Persia* sequel at Ubisoft HQ. Dour Frenchmen in suits pouring over sales charts, trying to piece together how the 2003 original, so critically acclaimed, so splendid, failed to spark amazing sales. Sure, it was released near Xmas. Granted, there were plenty of other great games demanding attention. But they knew all too well that "second place" is just a fancy term for losing.

At this point, the development chief wheels in a rolling video of *Prince of Persia 1*, and rhetorically asks those assembled where they went wrong. Someone weakly comments that the Middle East isn't exactly a realm of magic and mystery in the North American consciousness anymore. "Easily fixed," says the developer, attaching a sheet of brown cellophane to the screen – "now it could be set anywhere." Producing a tape deck, the vaguely Arabic sounds are drowned out by grinding metal. The men in suits start to perk up.

ON THE DVD Check out exactly why PCGA thinks it was a crime the original didn't sell > Demos

Expect a darker, and indeed nastier, *Prince of Persia* this time around.

The opening level is set onboard a pirate ship, under attack from these goat-headed monsters.

Defeating this beastie means climbing on his body, running up his back and plunging your dagger into his neck.

For the first time all day, they can smell money.

And so, a year, later, we're reintroduced to the Prince. His hair is longer, his wardrobe is darker, and he now seems to have an American accent. He's got a bad attitude, but he's still platforming royalty, thanks to his wonderful balance of movement and combat. As in his last adventure, he's fun to watch and a joy to play, thanks to the sophisticated code driving his animation. He leaps, he bounds, he dashes and rolls. He can run right up walls, or along them, forcing you to re-think what is and isn't possible in a platform game environment.

If you are one of the many (or rather, most) who missed his quest last year, then this movement scheme would be novelty enough. But then there's his new and improved battle mechanics, where through the movement controls and single attack button combos and fighting techniques emerge before your eyes. Returning to the Prince's right hand is his trademark time-blade, which can roll back the clock to erase embarrassing mistakes. Complimenting this is his left hand, now party to dual-wielding, scimitar-hurling action. There are around 60 different weapons in the game, and plenty to choose from in any given scene; once the ghouls start to drop, the ground gets cluttered with undead armaments.

Combat is intense, but its counterpart is the cerebral, abstract world of platform gaming puzzles. Not the same old lava pool hopscotch rubbish, mind, but expansive trials of mental gymnastics. The standard camera is a zoomed-in third person view of the Prince, trailing him around as he assumes arty poses for significant actions. But one can also zoom in for a first-person view, or zoom out to see the entire area he's trying to navigate. It's here that echoes of the 2D original can be heard, as a tiny representation of our hero goes through the platform game paces on a scale reminiscent of old-school ASCII.

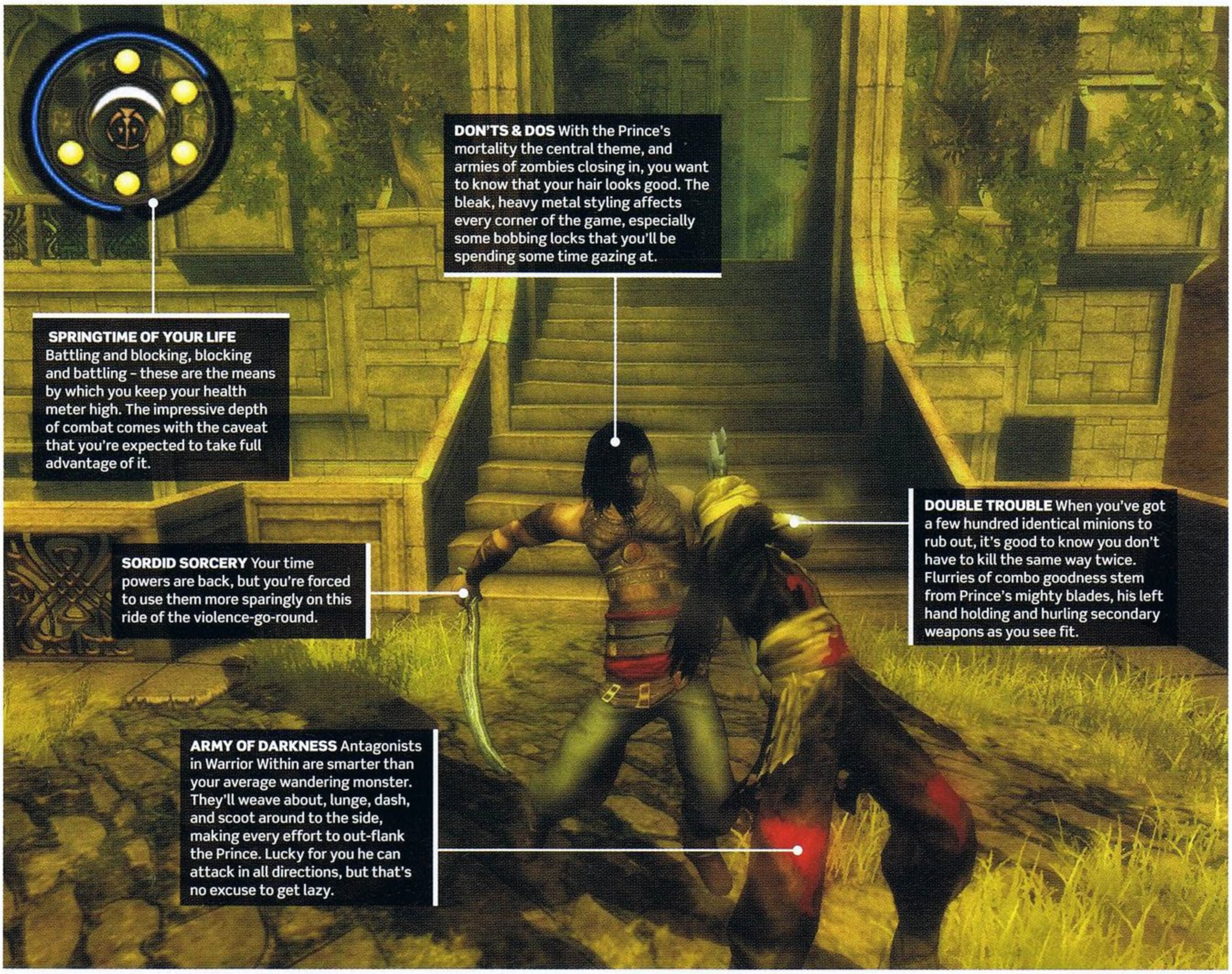
Not the same old lava pool hopscotch

It brings to mind the even more critically praised (and commercially troubled) universe of *Ico*. Through the force of sheer scale, a profound sense of the other-worldly comes across. The Castle of Time is massive, seemingly in a state of decay since before the creation of the universe. Buzzing about in the air are randomised aural cues, fragments of backwards-masking giving the impression that you're pushing towards some kind of temporal vortex, even when you're just exploring another corridor. The Prince's running commentary is another plus; snide and humorous quips that suggest he's having a very bad day.

What of the story, then? Well, despite surviving the minions and plummeting death traps of *The Sands of Time*, the Prince is still in trouble. It seems all of his time-meddling has unleashed a monster, the "Dahaka," a towering, unstoppable beast that has started following him around. It's a shambling, un-living embodiment of bad karma, a yawning doom-chasm on legs. So, like a good-natured terminator, the Prince has no choice but to travel into the past to stop the sands ever being created. To this end he's made his way to the Island of Time, a ▶

TAKEN APART

"There's always time to kill..."


DON'TS & DOS With the Prince's mortality the central theme, and armies of zombies closing in, you want to know that your hair looks good. The bleak, heavy metal styling affects every corner of the game, especially some bobbing locks that you'll be spending some time gazing at.
SPRINGTIME OF YOUR LIFE Battling and blocking, blocking and battling – these are the means by which you keep your health meter high. The impressive depth of combat comes with the caveat that you're expected to take full advantage of it.
SORDID SORCERY Your time powers are back, but you're forced to use them more sparingly on this ride of the violence-go-round.
DOUBLE TROUBLE When you've got a few hundred identical minions to rub out, it's good to know you don't have to kill the same way twice. Flurries of combo goodness stem from Prince's mighty blades, his left hand holding and hurling secondary weapons as you see fit.
ARMY OF DARKNESS Antagonists in Warrior Within are smarter than your average wandering monster. They'll weave about, lunge, dash, and scoot around to the side, making every effort to out-flank the Prince. Lucky for you he can attack in all directions, but that's no excuse to get lazy.

ghastly place that may hold the secret to averting his prematurely fated death.

As the game opens, we're introduced to the high class of minion the Empress of Time employs. Shahdee wears a minimalist gimp outfit from the Voldo school of character design, one which the designers have imbued with only a bare standard of modesty. When a key villain's entrance consists of an extreme close-up of her buttocks ascending some steps, you quickly fathom the position to set your brow: low. Still, in any other game, such a rump reveal would be out of place, but this is one sexy game. Movement is smooth, combat is dynamic, and the puzzles verge, dare we say, on the graphic.

It must be stressed however that Warrior Within is not a game for people with older hardware. While the developers have generously allowed for graphics cards without pixel shader support, its absence pours cold water over the entire experience. Why, the lowest settings only make you wish they'd go lower still, back to the clarity of flat-shaded polygons. And forget about using the zoomed-out area view to get around, as paths, death-traps and wandering monsters all come across with the same shade of gray.

An extreme close-up of her buttocks

Aside from that shiny new novelty-coloured video card, now might also be the time to finally buy one of those console-style controllers. The age of the PC exclusive platform game is long gone, and even a title as slick as *Warrior Within* must deal with the incongruity of WASD/mouse control being mapped onto a console-optimised game. It doesn't make *WW* impossible to play ('Impossible mode' is there though for the challenge seekers), but there is a distinct period of adjustment. Save points are another relic from TV land, though the developers have at least had the decency to swap out "Press Start to begin" for a proper menu.

So, *Prince of Persia* is bigger and bolder than ever. Behind the populist presentation is a core of solid combat, epic exploration and graphical finesse. We're struggling to find deficiencies in this formula, other than upon its conclusion there isn't a whole lot of places to go. Other than to play through the whole thing again, which isn't that bad a proposition. Because let's face it – the second coming of *Commander Keen* just isn't going to happen.

JAMES COTTEE

PC GAMES ADDICT **Innovative platforming action**

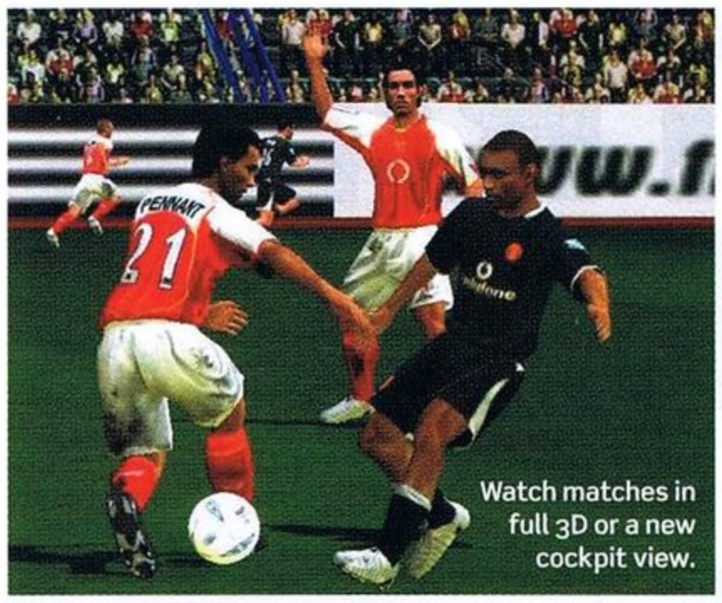
IT'S ›Dark›Daring›Dangerous› Better than most action games

IT'S NOT ›Historically accurate›Half-bad› Terribly different to the first

Strapping

90%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** Ubisoft ■ **They say** PIII 1.0 GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB video card ■ **We say** PIV 1.5 GHz, 512MB RAM, 128MB video card ■ **Multiplayer** N/A ■ **Link** www.princeofpersiagame.com ■ **Community** N/A ■ **Influenced by** Metallica, Panel Van art ■ **Alternatively** Prince of Persia: Sands of Time



Creating extreme tactics with the formation editor is one of the few ways you can have an influence.

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005

Managers make lousy spectators. EA prove the theory

As the tears welled up in his eyes we were left in no doubt. Football management is a cruel game. Bobby Robson was once the toast of the Toon and the face of EA's *Total Club Manager*. A year on, he's jobless -Twelve months is a long time in football, but not quite long enough, it seems, for the *TCM* series.

Coping with an embedded version of the 3D *FIFA* graphics engine has always been the task that has cursed *TCM*'s development. As Henry strokes a half-volleyed lob over the keeper at a floodlit clock-end, *Championship Manager*'s 2D matches couldn't be further from your mind. This is by far the most convincing 3D match EA have ever created. But inevitably, prolonged probing reveals the usual holes: defenders hanging too deep, a lack of variety from setpieces, and the same familiar goals. These flaws aren't show-stoppers, but the feeling of helplessness created by the muted tactical options certainly is.

The potential to tinker is sadly limited by the game's biggest selling point: the *FIFA* engine. Options are plentiful but the effects are too subtle. Tactical sliders, tick boxes and even a grid that allows you to specify player positions relative to the ball are lost in ten minute matches captured at camera angles that give little indication of your tactical changes at work. It's like sitting out a permanent touchline ban. The feeling of helplessness maybe realistic but it's still deeply unsatisfying. You feel that your input is limited to the half-time team talks, barked out in a mockney manager voice straight out of some random B-grade Britcom not even UKTV would air. The tickbox to turn off this ill-advised audio is welcome.

Prolonged probing reveals the usual holes

What we really needed was a 'Turn Off Frustration' box for a game that comes so close to being a contender, but is denied by its schizophrenic approach. On the one hand it offers the glitz of the *FIFA* engine and ten minute matches. Yet the off-the-field activity is often over-complicated. Despite an overhaul that sees *Total Club Manager* move to a 1-100 scale for player attributes, the overall system of player levels, talent, potential and skills is baffling for newcomers. While the convoluted training element remains a task best left to your in-game assistant in order to spare yourself from statistical overload. Elsewhere in the game, the half-baked peripheral features such as stadium design and merchandise, (this year joined by a new 'create a club' mode) are at least hidden away as options, no longer used as apologies for the half-witted match AI.

EA have spent the year grinding out results on the pitch – now they have to work on making us feel less like a spectator and more like a manager. Achieve that and, when this genre makes the wholesale move to 3D, EA should be sitting pretty. *Total Club Manager 2005* suggests that day may only be another year away. Maybe.

MARK SUTHERNS

PC GAMES ADDICT Sits you in the stands, not the dugout

IT'S › Supremely polished › Complex › Pretty

IT'S NOT › Ultra realistic › A tactical genius › A total management experience

Hamstrung

73%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 600MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card.
■ **Multiplayer** 1-4 players ■ **Link** www.totalclubmanager.com ■ **Influenced by** FIFA, sadly ■ **Alternatively** Championship Manager 03/04

COUNTER-STRIKE SOURCE

Bang bang, we're dead. Again, and again, and again

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

Thumbnail Review

The greatest online shooter, now with *HL2* technology

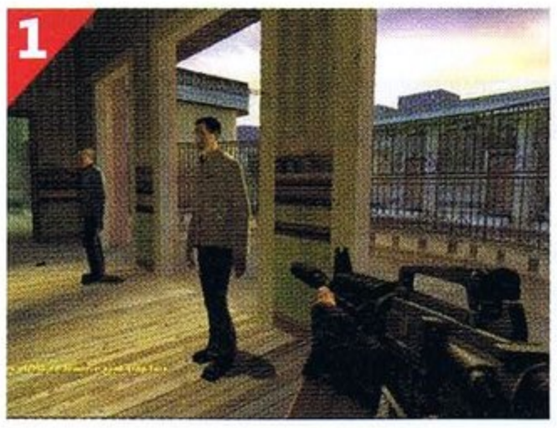
- ☑ The War on Terror
- ☑ Violent
- ☑ Free with Half-Life 2
- ☒ Pwnage

It's still the best online action game around, Valve have just widened the gap.

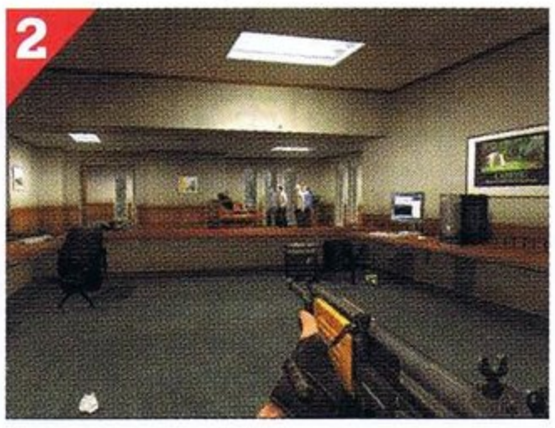
GO GO GO!

Lock and load: part one

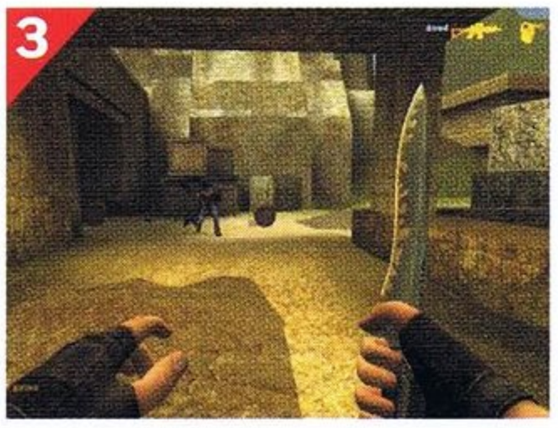
Remember these? Your guide to the maps included in *CS:Source*



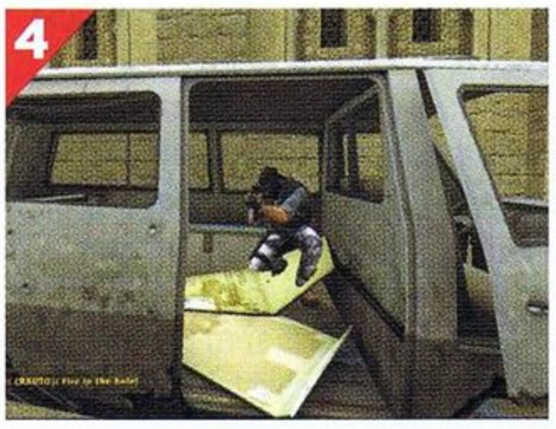
HAVANA! The hostages are being held on the first floor of an abandoned building. A confusing map. Score: **5/10**



OFFICE! The real highlight. Storm a snow-covered office complex to rescue the shivering prisoners. Score: **8/10**



AZTEC! An ancient temple is under attack. A classic layout let down by some muddy textures. Score: **7/10**



DUST and DUST2! The classic. For many players this Middle-Eastern marketplace *is Counter-Strike*. Combined score: **10/10**

Dear hostages. Perhaps you should take a seat. We'll have you out of there in no time... just as soon as we've grown bored of rolling these barrels, shot up a few boxes of oranges, played soccer with melons and toppled a rusty bicycle. In the meantime, do try not to go all Stockholm syndrome on us. Best regards, Sgt_Dr00py. SEALS.

CS: Source is the 'official' multiplayer bundled with *Half-Life 2*, the online component you'll be playing long after Gordon and Alyx's adventures are over. After *Counter-Strike*'s initial success as an amateur mod, Valve gave the team a big hug, and drew them into their studio. *CS:Source* is a 're-imaging' of their work, applying the marvellous technology used in *Half-Life 2* to an online-only game. There's been an unwarranted level of criticism over this decision, cries of "where's the deathmatch?", "this isn't new", and "we expected *Team Fortress 2*". Dear everyone: shut up. This is a brilliant freebie, sold as part of *Half-Life 2*. We can assume that if you're reading this magazine, at some point you're going to buy *Half-Life 2*. I mean, come on. Just *look* at it.

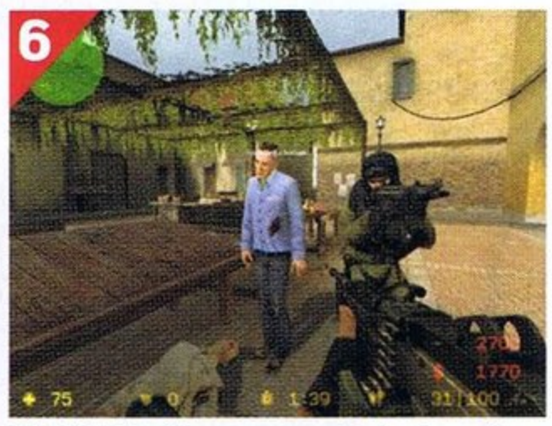
The fundamentals haven't changed. Two sets of objectives exist in *CS*: rescue or defend a group of hostages, or bomb and defend sites of historical importance. Killing the enemy, or completing your objectives, nets you cash, to be spent on deadlier weapons, Kevlar armour and matching earmuffs, grenades, defusing kits, nightvision goggles, and every accessory for the fashion conscious 21st century digital warrior. Half-Life TV and integrated voice-chat technology have added to the social experience. For pro-gamers it's less a game, more a way of life.

FASTER!

Lock and load: part two

Which are our favourite maps?

COBBLE! A stately home under attack. A superb map, but the makeover is less extensive than you'd expect. Score: **7/10**



ITALY! A Mediterranean suburb where the improved market square makes for much fruit-based hilarity. Score: **9/10**

PIRANESI! A hilltop castle and tourist attraction, full of winding corridors and priceless antiquities. Score: **6/10**

CHATEAU! An undervalued gem. Watch out for cheeky players dropping vases onto each others' heads. Score: **8/10**

And yet, we're having problems taking *CS: Source* seriously. Sorry. It's just so entertaining, full of stupidly violent shootouts, suicidal charges and tense red-wire/green-wire scenes of soldiers disarming several kiloton's worth of high-explosive. This game continually throws up the finest firefights we've ever seen in a videogame: full stop. Rescuing those hostages, planting that bomb, buying that lethal hardware all has a delicious rhythm to it, always new, always fresh. Online battles still have the capacity to surprise; players are devising new tactics for the ancient de_dust map years after its debut.

All I can hear are high-pitched squeals

Sometimes you need to take a step back, and just watch the action unfold. Just ahead, a couple of our guys are holding the corner, stepping out, just trying to give cov... oops, make that one guy trying to give covering fire. Our sniper is crouched down, focused entirely on the corridor, waiting for the terrorists to show their faces. All I can hear are sharp, high pitched squeals, the result of one too many flash-bangs going off next to my ears. We're swimming in fog, stumbling over debris, picking our way through cadavers and discarded weapons. But just as we're about to charge to the rescue, a corpse flies through the air, arms wheeling, caught in the horrific discharge of multiple frag grenades. Then we just start giggling, and all our clever tactical planning goes to pot. Again.

Key to this success is the visual makeover. Most maps feel like genuine places thanks to extensive re-texturing, subtle visual effects and the careful littering of debris and extraneous objects about the place. By far and away the most successful reworking is cs_office, the snowy agency that's been a staple of the game since year dot. Stage a firefight in the back rooms by the (freakishly tall) captives and watch as stray bullets clip PCs, shattering their cases to reveal the internal chips. Fire a single round into the safety glass windows and they'll shatter, but not collapse. Watch then, as one of your team-mates leaps through the glass, leaving a terrorist-shaped hole. Remarkable.

Then, there's the subtle change in dynamics. Flash-bangs are striking in their effectiveness – get caught in their blast radius and you'll not only be blinded, but a strange after-image is burnt into your retina: you'll find yourself shooting at visual artefacts, rather than the dangerous chap with the pointy gun and angry grimace. Skilful players will notice that shadows can now be used to aid ambushes: hide in a dark corner and wait for your opponents to give themselves away. The physics may seem pointless to begin with, but we're starting to see players improvise in the heat of the moment, using barrels as ▶

TAKEN APART

"Mind the stall for five minutes, bud?"

FREE MAN Walk up to these hostages and press 'E' and they'll follow the counter terrorists to safety. Or headlong into an ambush. They're not quite real, but almost there: their sotto voices when responding to CT demands give proceedings an edgy feel, while their yelps of pain when under attack are almost cute.

BETTER SPLIT Fire-fights in this little corner of Italy are enlivened by flying fruit. It's hard not to be distracted by an incoming melon or ballistic banana. Sadly, the chickens, so beloved of the community, are no more. Valve have gone vegetarian.

SGT DROOPY It's easy to ambush the CTs on Italy. There are four routes into the terrorist's spawn, and at least one of these will be undefended. That means you can drop back, and wait for them to reach the hostages, before heading back down the hill. As they approach safety, you can attack, catching them off guard. You hope.

temporary cover or to hide the flashing bomb, using grenades to blow rifles back into the hands of an unarmed terrorist... there will be more.

And yet, we have criticisms. All the levels in this first release are taken from the very latest version of vanilla *CS*, and the choices are a little confusing. Maps like de_piranesi (blow up/protect a medieval castle come museum of antiquities) and cs_havana (a hostage rescue effort set in a South-American slum) just aren't that interesting, with too few choke points and confusing crisscross patterns. The latter example in particular goes out of its way to frustrate you, by randomly rotating which doors are opened and closed at the start of a round; forcing both sides into picking their path through almost unfamiliar territory. Will you turn a corner to face a brick wall and almost certain death? Probably.

Will you turn a corner to face a brick wall?

Yet in three months, that might not be an issue. The wider community is desperately seeking some way of creating for the Source engine. We have no reason to doubt that map-makers will be churning out re-makes of classics, alongside novel ideas and layouts.

There's a reason why *CS* became the most played mod on the planet: it's because it's awesome. It's comfort gaming, something you can slip into for an evening. Just one more map, just one more round, one more-headshot, one more life. It seems so simple, little more than kill or be killed, but the human dynamic changes *everything*. Dodging the best sniper on the map, rushing the nearest bomb-site, crushing the opposition... these are all stories we create in our hours of play. Yet it just got better. This update has refreshed our love of the game, bringing a new physicality and violence to online shooters. *CS:Source* is essential.

TIM EDWARDS

PC GAMES ADDICT **Perfect multiplayer shooting**

IT'S › Sniper central › Brutal › Physics in motion

IT'S NOT › Very different › Just a patch › For one night only

Explosive

91%

■ **Release** Out now (via Steam) ■ **Publisher** Valve ■ **Developer** Valve ■ **They say** 600MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM, Radeon 9800 or equivalent
■ **Multiplayer** only, LAN, Internet ■ **Link** www.counter-strike.net ■ **Community** www.csnation.net ■ **Influenced by** Counter-Strike, Half-Life 2 ■ **Alternatively** Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

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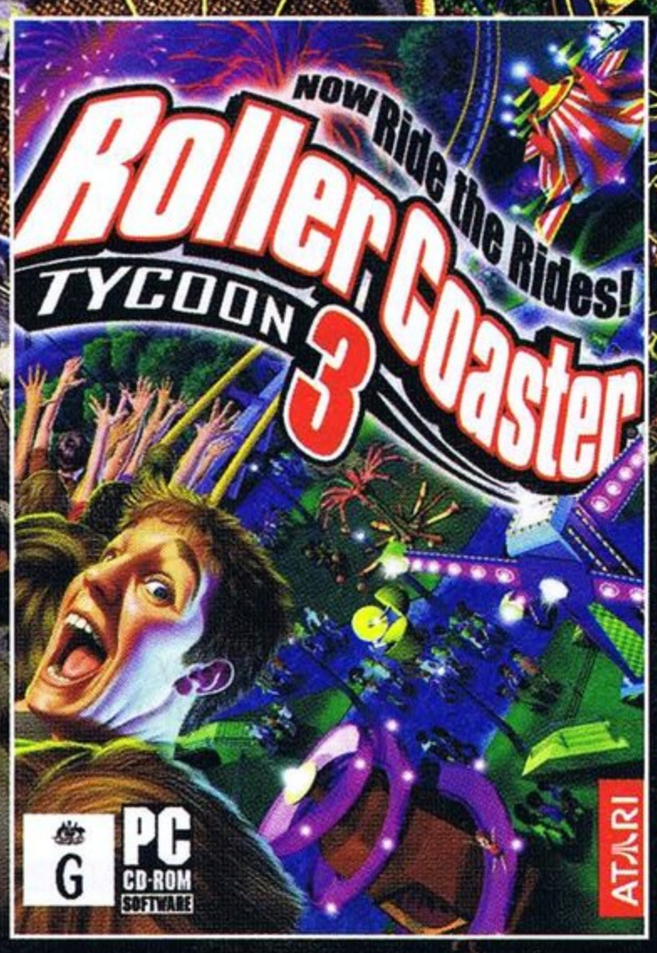

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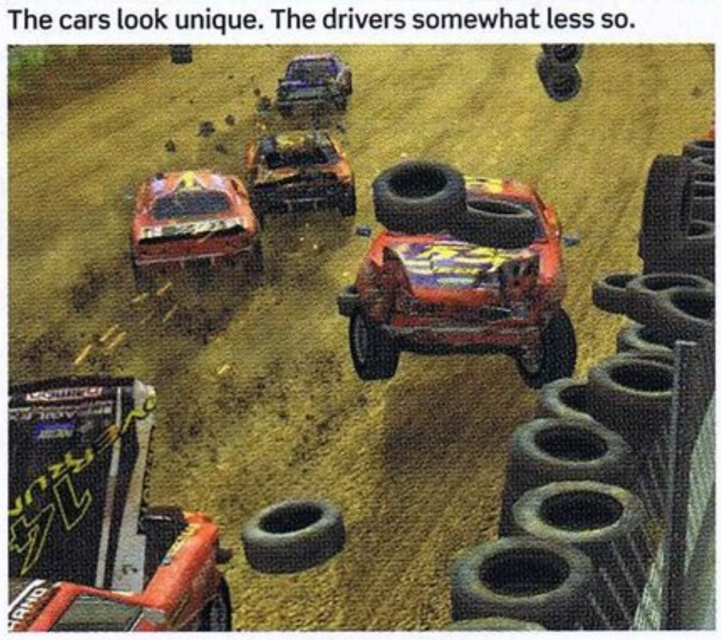
FLATOUT

Flat out, crash in, smash about, straight up

It's like joyriding, but without the inconvenience of having to steal someone's car.

The cars look unique. The drivers somewhat less so.



Funny sort of 'realism' we're getting from our games these days. On the one hand, proper physics propel *FlatOut*'s drivers, cars and scenery through the air according to Newton's finest laws. On the other, all the drivers are identically clad clones, which makes them look a little eerie as they sail floppily out of their vehicles to a crunching stop. Still, *FlatOut* proves the old maxim: if you enjoy something, never let logic get in the way.

Thumbnail Review

Red-neck racing plus rag-doll physics

- ☑ Dangerous drivers
- ☑ Silly sub-games
- ☑ Nitrous!
- ☒ Airbags

Initially impressive, with physics you'll call mates over to see, but it flatters to deceive.

And there's plenty to enjoy in *FlatOut*, even if it revolves almost exclusively around the spectacular physics. Finnish boy-racers Bugbear have turned the physical cause-and-effect of hitting things into a central feature. The resulting tumbles, collisions, ragdolling drivers, domino effects and general crumpling is more fun than it has any right to be.

Collisions and crashes are a vital part of the racing because every shunt and bump boosts your nitrous meter – a bonus speed reservoir that can be activated when needed most. Clip an advertising hoarding, and you'll get a token injection. Plough through a hundred yards of fencing and your meter will fill – but you'll naturally slow down through the impact. Thus races become balancing acts of deliberately nudging scenery and other cars while trying to maintain momentum.

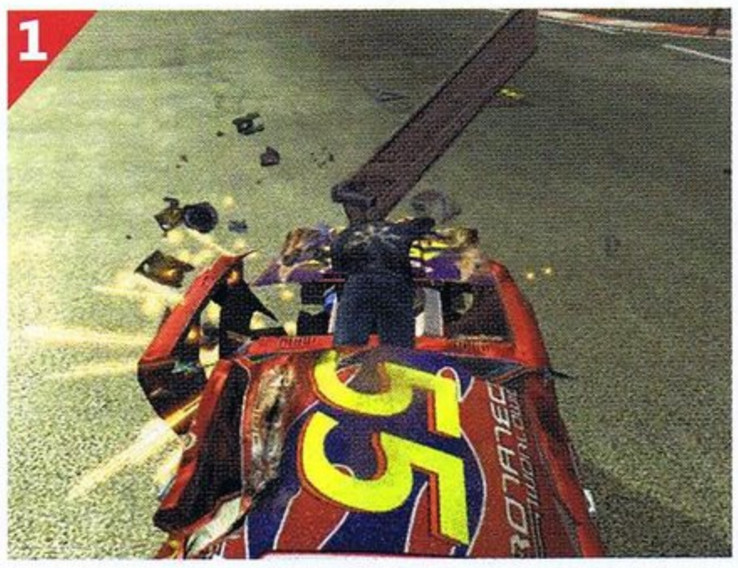
Which is all very well in the forgiving opening races of the bronze level (each level features 12 races across four settings), but the step to silver and gold is too steep. A proper crash in a bronze race is an opportunity to admire the slow-motion flailing of limbs and whiplash collisions, but a prang at silver means you're almost certainly out of contention. The AI drivers make few mistakes.

I'm the sort of chap who turns the other cheek in times of adversity; which is fortunate, because when the harder races get too much there's always

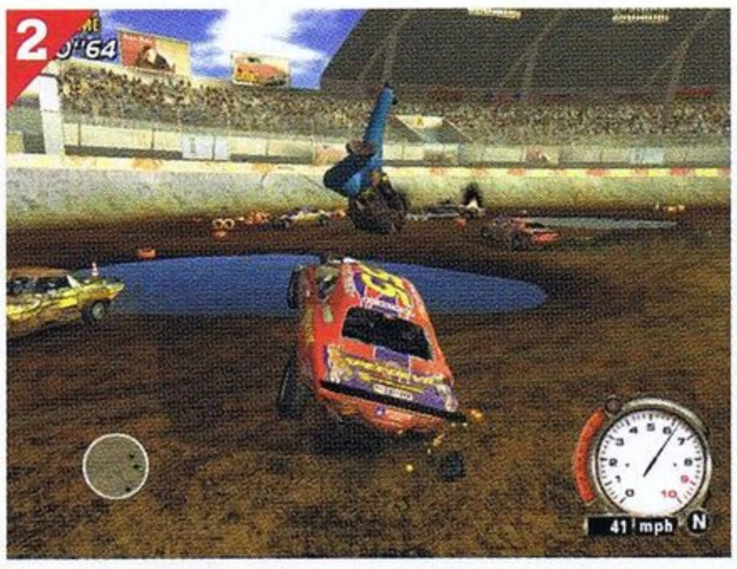
AERIAL ANTICS

If man were meant to fly...

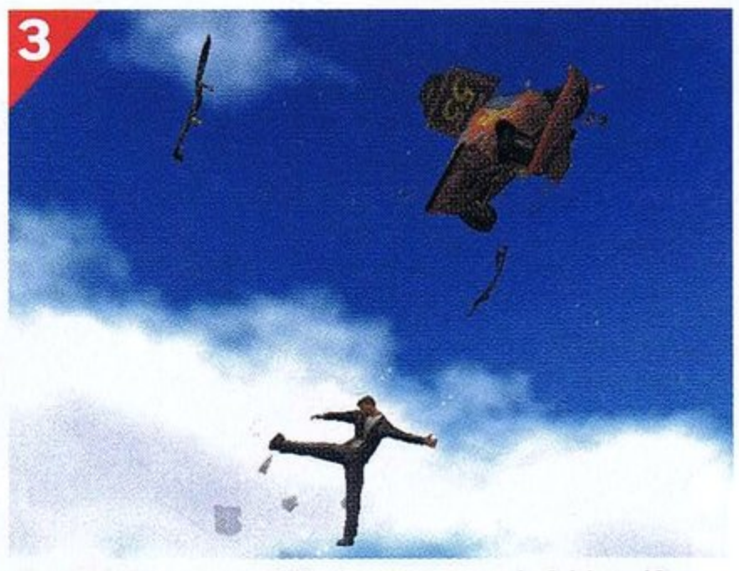
God would have put him in a car with a very fragile windscreen and no seatbelt



Captured: the moment at which our unstoppable force meets an immovable object. Something's gotta give, and it's the windscreen every time.



Heh. Sometimes you'll see AI drivers arcing gracefully across your path, emitting a resigned screaming noise. It's good manners to run them over to prevent suffering.



The High Jump, one of the bonus games, is fairly self-explanatory. In this particular attempt, though, I seem to have flipped the car higher than the driver.

"Over-tyred and emotional"

OTAL TIME
01'22"51
AP TIME
01'22"51
POSITION
7th
LAP
1/3
YOUR MAIM HERE Perfect fodder for accruing nitro relief, these flimsy wooden banners crumple satisfyingly under the slightest of pressure. Beware, though: they often hide harder objects, or will send you wildly off track. Aiming for this hoarding would put the motor so far into the soft snow as to make the detour pointless. All debris remains in place for the duration of the race, often providing dangerous obstacles.
WACKY RACERS All drivers come in two flavours: crazy male racer clones and crazy female racer clones. They've plenty of personality on the track, and will occasionally make their own mistakes unprompted by you. They also take different routes on each lap, but at higher levels they're almost... machine-like.
POWER SLIDE Being imaginary versions of silly Yankee motors, the cars handle like bricks, even when they're not on ice. Oversteer isn't so much a hazard as a feature, and though you can soup up your beast with improved tyres etc, you'll also need more engine power, putting you back at square one: behind the wheel of an overpowered and badly behaved racing car.
NITRO FAMILY Hit stuff, and this nitro bar fills up. Press Ctrl, you get a turbo boost. FlatOut doesn't really deal in subtlety. The only trick is working out what parts of the world won't actually crumple before your onrushing metal steed; tougher obstacles provide more nitro power but might slow you down or skid you off course altogether.
38 mph
1

something else to do. Returning to races you've already won is worthwhile to improve on placings (anywhere in the top three unlocks the next race). And your winnings can be spent on various upgrades to improve your performance or on a desirable new car. There's also a mode which is very clearly the result of the designers' late-night mucking-about with the physics engine. This knockabout section comprises a dozen events such as the high jump, long jump, darts and bowling. In cars. It's a great excuse to eject your driver at speed – with cunning aim, or to just smash things up in more traditional figure-eight and destruction derby events. Yet more cash can be won here, so you're sometimes able to abandon a tricky race, enjoy a few bonus games and return with enough cash to get just enough of an upgrade to ace the race. Clever.

Eject your driver at speed – with cunning aim

The presence of these bonus games is diverting but also instructive. The appeal rests purely on the game's physics, and it soon becomes clear that this is all that sustains the fun in the conventional races too. It's a good gimmick, but a gimmick all the same, and the joy of cartwheeling cars, bodies and debris wears off after a while. In particular, the way tyre walls suck you in and stop you dead had me screaming at the monitor when the fun was beginning to wear off and I was just trying to finish races. I suspect that the thousands of gamers who enjoy the demo might be reluctant to translate their initial enjoyment into a purchase of the full game, rightly suspecting there's not too much else to do. At $49.95 though, one can't whine too loudly.

Multiplayer extends things somewhat (no matter what racing game I'm playing, I always suspect AI drivers are cheating), but it's hard to justify a higher score for added fun you'll have to create yourself. All of which may sound like logic getting in the way of my enjoyment, but then I am a grumpy old man.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMES ADDICT **Slim, pretty and ideal for a brief affair**

IT'S › Fun › Physics › Safer than driving

IT'S NOT › A rally game › A racing sim › Perfectly balanced.

Wacky

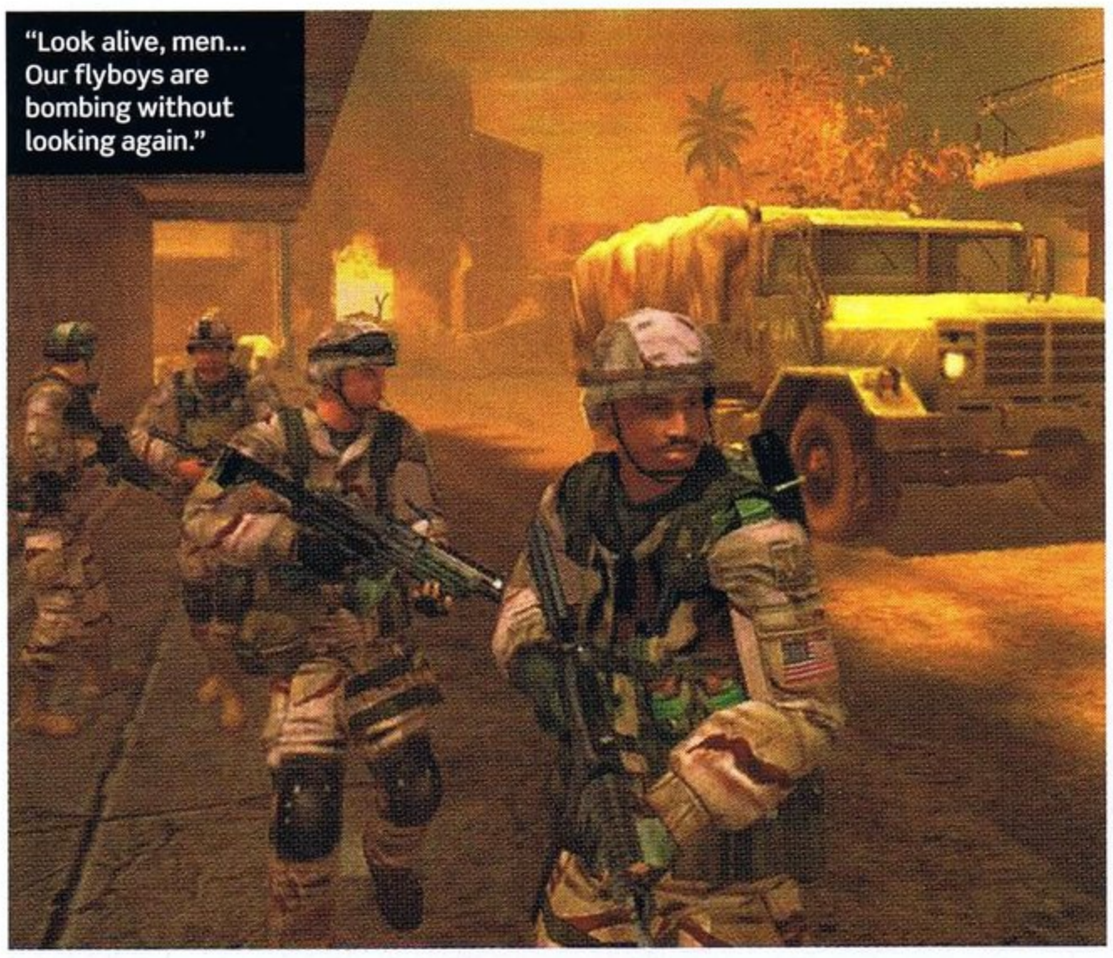
80%

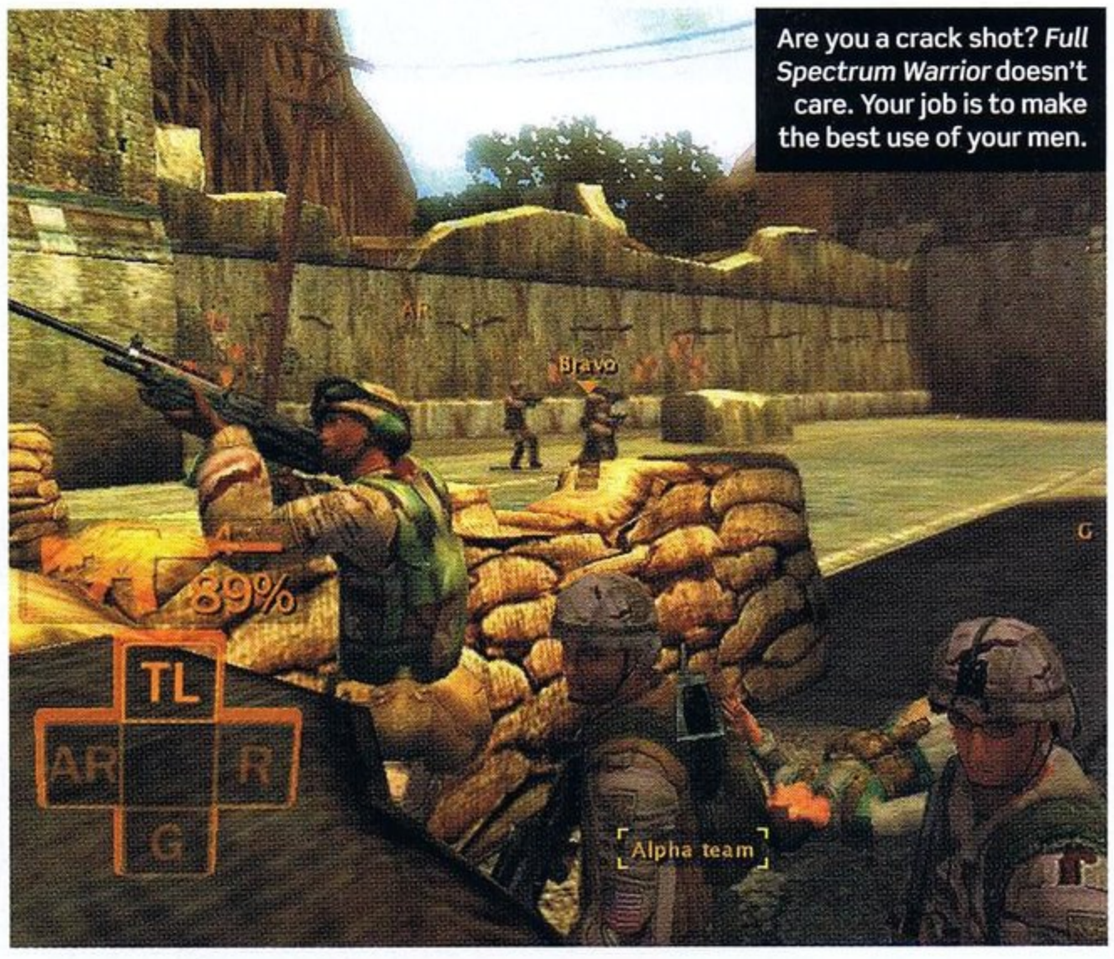
■ **Release** November 16 ■ **Publisher** Empire ■ **Developer** Bugbear ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.8GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Online, LAN, up to eight ■ **Link** www.bugbear.fi/flatout ■ **Community** www.flatoutgame.com/forum ■ **Influenced by** Demolition Derby, Burnout ■ **Alternatively** Midtown Madness 2

Review

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

Rainbow camouflage: it won't win a war





Oh yes: it's a sordid business. In my experience, those with first-hand experience of what supersonic-speed chunks of metal do to people don't speak of honour, or duty, or the privilege of fighting for freedom. Most don't want to talk about it at all. *Full Spectrum Warrior* doesn't shy away from the unpleasant parts of war, featuring a mass grave in an early level, but this is very much gaming from a Hollywood angle. The heroes are ordinary men, doing extraordinary things, and saving the day. Or at least re-loading until they do.

But don't be tempted to dismiss this as a *Conflict Desert Storm* wannabe. You're an ethereal commander/TV camera controlling two squads of four grunts in the fictional state of Zekistan, but, crucially, you don't directly control their gunfire. Directing them to take cover in specific spots and fire on any visible targets in a certain direction works far better than you'd think: move the mouse to position yellow dots which alter formation according to terrain, click, and the lads will take cover according to what's available at that spot. Make a mistake in their positioning, and they won't last for more than seconds.

FSW's bold paradigm shift – control the movements and positions of your men but not their firing accuracy – is refreshing. The challenge here is not of your reflexes (though swift decisions are vital) or accuracy, but of your tactical nous. Cover isn't just important, it's vital for your fleshy friends, quite literally coming between them and a trip home in a body-bag. Use it wisely, leapfrogging your two units to cover each other and gain the best view of Zekistan's streets, alleys, airport, mosques and ruins, and all will be well.

Well, that's the theory. In fact, Pandemic have automated things rather too efficiently. The most obvious successes – taking out

Thumbnail Review

A slick military squad sim that's easy to get to grips with

- ☑ Invade
- ☑ Shoot
- ☑ Shout
- ☒ WMD

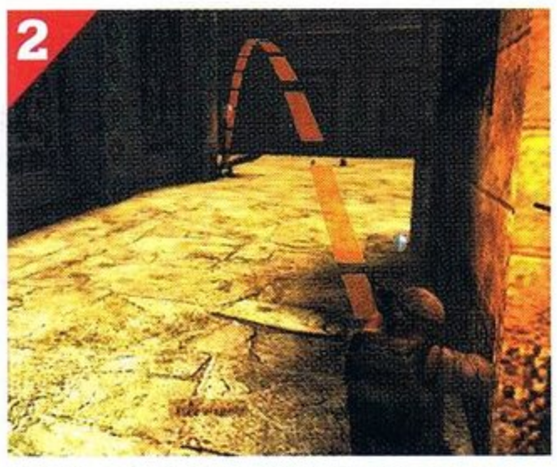
A refreshing take on controlling soldiers and an engaging core of action can't cover up the lack of substance.

FULL METAL WAISTCOAT

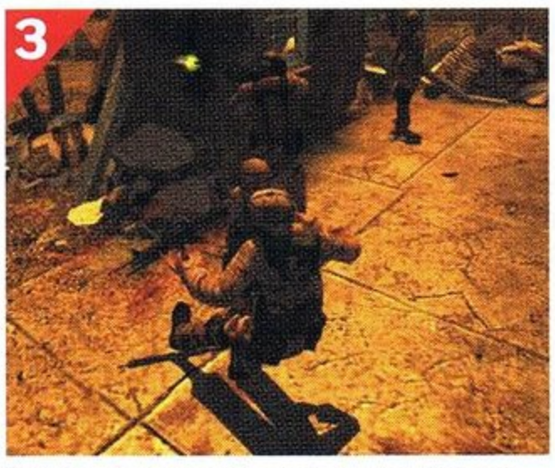
There's nothing like a good, hard Yank

Taking lives, orders and lead is all in a day's work for a heroic G.I.

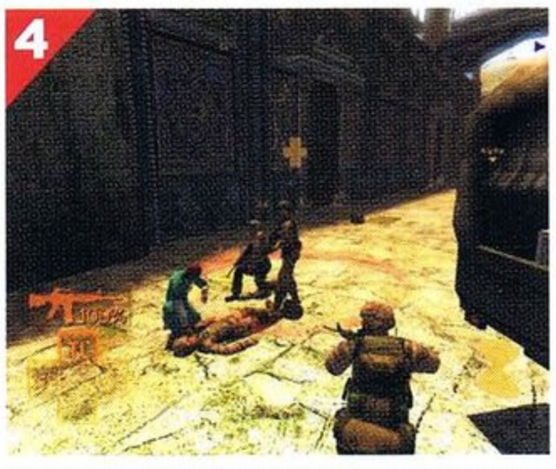
Sergeants of each four-man unit bark orders when you give them. They're gruff, in a very butch way.



There's a limited number of grenades at your disposal between re-equippings. They're accurate but seriously short range.



Slow-motion camera and spurts of blood accompany serious injuries. This chap will have to be carried to safety now.



Get the leaking footsoldier to a medic, and he'll soon be back on his feet. Lose two from a squad, though, and it's curtains.

A quick Tango lesson

UNCLE ZEKE The enemies, or 'Tangos' are mostly imaginatively concealed behind crates. If he's behind cover like this, a shield icon indicates you're unlikely to score a hit. Time to pin him down and send your other squad to flank him.
MISSION STATEMENT Tasks vary little from the department of 'take out the RPG' and 'locate the armour'. Fine if there were sufficient variety elsewhere in the game, but apart from a few impressive locations it's a mostly unremitting affair of inevitable Zekes and dusty streets.
023.8m
Clear the enemy RPG.
BULLET TIME Your trash-talking troopers carry oodles of ammo so it's rare that you'll ever run out, unless you enjoy endless, futile firefights. Fortunately, at every medical area (where badly wounded comrades can be carried) is a resupply truck with all the ammo you could need.
Alpha
88%
TL
AR
R
G
R
Bravo team
UNDER COVER Cover, such as stack of solid crates, is supernaturally protective and thus the most important element in any combat situation. In the open, these grunts would be cut down in seconds, but like this they can lay down suppressing fire until their buddies can get within grenade range.

enemies – are achieved almost automatically. The most obvious failures – losing men to enemy fire – are exclusively your fault. There isn't quite enough reward for your laboured positioning and tactical cunning. In fact, you begin to wonder whether the game has anything more to show you after the second level; and sadly the answer is 'not much'.

Which is a damn shame, because *FSW* boasts a couple of very smart features. The first, which I'd like to see replacing the quicksave in all sorts of games, offers a replay feature in addition to a 'revert to savepoint' when you've lost too many men. Take the replay, fast-forward to just before your ignominious defeat, and assume control again, this time avoiding the devious Zeke and his rocket grenades. It's a feature only spoilt by the sped-up dialogue of your unit, making their cynical, macho expressions sound like something from Alvin and the Chipmunks.

> The devious Zeke and his rocket grenades

The second feature is a co-op mode which lets you and a chum take a squad each into Tango territory. Coming from the single-player game, it's bizarre having to second-guess someone else, but just about the most compelling argument on PC to get yourself sorted out with some kind of voice-over-net setup.

That apart, *Full Spectrum Warrior* feels like nothing of the sort – it's as narrow and unbranching as Zekistan's roads. From the first mission to the last, there's barely a progression of squad size or weapons – just the scale of the challenge. And even towards the end, you're only ever facing a few Tangos at a time to be painstakingly winkled from their firing positions, never the dozens of AK-wielding nutters you end up longing for.

Full Spectrum Warrior's heritage as a US Army training tool is all too evident. Pandemic nearly forgot they needed to make a game too, and as a result *FSW* is too realistic, too automated – and not enough fun.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMES ADDICT Nice ideas, shame about the realism

IT'S › Sweary › Gung-ho › One-track

IT'S NOT › Full › For the Spectrum › War as we know it

Hoo-ha

76%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** THQ ■ **Developer** Pandemic ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb, 32Mb 3D card, 1.8Gb HD ■ **We say** 1.8GHz CPU, 512Mb, 64Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Two in co-op ■ **Link** www.fullspectrumwarrior.com ■ **Influenced by** Conflict Desert Storm, Stormin' Norman ■ **Alternatively** Conflict Desert Storm II

JUICED

Best played with a doner kebab and pint of Stella

The game can look splendid at times.

Tracks are gorgeous and very convincing.

Jostling in the pack like this is a lottery. One false move and you'll be eating trackside ephemera.

Victims of cleverly disguised anti-marketing will love this. You know, the type who think a certain label of clothing will bring cred, or that don't realise their car screams, "Compensating!" *Juiced* is geared almost exclusively towards these image-focused folk – who wouldn't know actual style and good taste if it slapped them around the face with a razor-edged monocle – by leaping onto the car-modding bandwagon and bringing little to it.

Which is more than a little baffling. Why does *Juiced* want to sell itself so short? It's not a great game, granted. A *good* game, certainly, and often a very entertaining one, but sometimes it entertains for all the wrong reasons. Take the music video-style intro, for instance. No disrespect intended to the performers involved here, but Blazin' Squad are, in comparison, the very masters of their art and the very paragon of good taste. *Need For Speed Underground* trailblazed the car-modding fad and, perhaps knowing that it can only wither and burn in the megawatt gaze of EA's big-budget blingery, *Juiced* has opted for the lower-rent grass roots vote. Whether the grass roots will opt for this second-bestery or hold out for the absurdly slick production values of *NFSU2* is something only time will tell, but the bottom line is EA are riding this fad tall in the saddle, and *Juiced*, bless its troubled heart, isn't scaling the same heights.

Becomes a downward spiral of joylessness

As you might expect, it's all about respect. Winning races gets you the cash to buy better cars, which in turn allows you to progress by entering more prestigious races. If you've not got the right ride, you're stuck, and will probably be forced to bet on pink slip races, where your motor itself is at stake. If your rep suffers *Juiced* soon becomes a downward spiral of joylessness, because it severely limits what you can do – and the contrary handling is right at the heart of this.

Pleasingly, the game is more sim-like than arcade, complete with an effective damage model (and your car needs to be repaired if you bang it up, forcing you to race cleverly). However, it's not without its problems. Sliding kills your speed, and touching the brake too much, or oversteering even minutely, sees you spin uncontrollably. For all the dedication it takes to harness your car, there are a number of inconsistencies that undo your good driving in a moment of profanity-laden frustration. The game rewards practice, but then tends to spit in your face. Which is never particularly nice.

Juiced is irritating, but the detailed tracks, over 50 excellent car models, bewildering customisation options and cheapo charm of building your good name against the other guttersnipes somewhat redeems it. However. there's something missing at its core, and you know EA won't make the same mistake.

JES BICKHAM

PC GAMES ADDICT All surface, no depth – and no style

IT'S › Cheap › Cheerful › Imprecise

IT'S NOT › Subtle › Sorted › Bling

Drained

64%

■ **Release** TBC ■ **Publisher** THQ ■ **Developer** Juice Games ■ **They say** 933MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, DX9b 3D card ■ **We say** 2.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM
■ **Multiplayer** 1-6 online and LAN ■ **Link** wwwjuicedthegame.com ■ **Influenced by** Need For Speed Underground ■ **Alternatively** Need For Speed Underground, Midnight Club II

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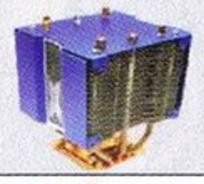
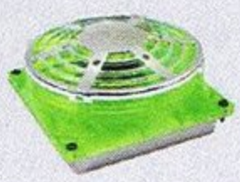
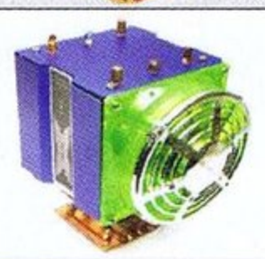
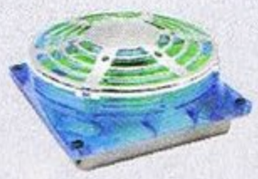
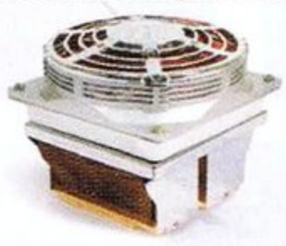
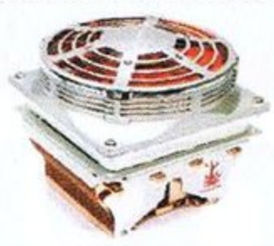
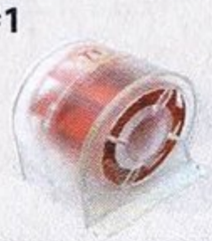
					
UFO#1 		UFO#1 + Hammer525	UFO#1+ PIPE101		UFO#1 + TOWER112
UFO#2 	UFO#2 + GOLF325		UFO#2 + PIPE101	UFO#2 + TOWER102	
UFO#3		UFO#3 + Hammer525		UFO#3 + TOWER102	UFO#3 + TOWER112
XBPRO#1 	XBPRO#1 + GOLF325			XBPRO#1 + TOWER102	XBPRO#1 + TOWER112
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Silent Cat 9CM	Silent Cat 9CM + GOLF325		Silent Cat 9CM + PIPE101		Silent Cat 9CM + TOWER112
Street Fighter	Street Fighter + GOLF325		Street Fighter + PIPE101	Street Fighter + TOWER102	Street Fighter + TOWER112

* Technical specifications available from www.thermaltake.com.au
* Fans can also be used as a case fan for total system cooling

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PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

This is as close as you want to get to a fully charged-up Disc Editor cum tribal warrior.

Use the grappling hook to hitch a skybound lift.

The indoor arenas can't compete with the great outdoors.

Thumbnail Review

Take to the skies in the jumpiest, floatiest Sci-fi FPS

- ☑ Jetpacks
- ☑ Robo-trousers
- ☑ Cross country skiing
- ☒ Newton

A thrilling blend of flying, flag capturing, tank busting and epic pantomime.

TRIBES VENGEANCE

Be Peter Pan

Tales from *Tribes* part one. The incoming flag runner is just too fast. He weaves past our defences, using the terrain to best effect. He skis down the slopes, firing his jump-pack in short bursts, saving it for the big leap. At the very last he hits the jets, escaping the bubblegum-blue spinfusor discs, fireballs and Newton's influence for clear open sky. At the very apex of his arc, he fires out a grappling hook, latching onto our flag stand, and swings horizontally, pulling himself in. Without a moment's hesitation, he's gone, launching himself back into the maelstrom, heading home. Our team lets out a collective sigh – a mixture of professional approval and outright jealousy.

Tales from *Tribes* part two. Our own tribal war correspondent is getting jiggy with physics, on an empty server, perfecting his own flag runs. He skis straight downwards, picking up enormous, uncontrollable speed. Faster, faster, faster – until his jet-pack is spent. Then, a problem: 30 feet of solid wall. There's no escape, no stopping, no brakes. Eyes shut, screaming, he barrels forth, Wile E Coyote-style, leaving a writer-shaped stain on the brickwork. The camera cuts to a third-person view, just in time to see the corpse stand up straight before toppling backwards. Your correspondent lets out a sigh – a mixture of professional embarrassment and outright frustration.

Tribes is *hard*. Hard to play offline, harder to play online. It's a game that requires total three-dimensional awareness – a predictive eye, an appropriate sense of scale, perfect distance perception, quick reactions and tactical understanding. It's a game that you can become very, very good at, but only if you're prepared to put the work in.

CAST LIST

Making a drama out of an intergalactic crisis

Presenting the travelling tribal troubadours

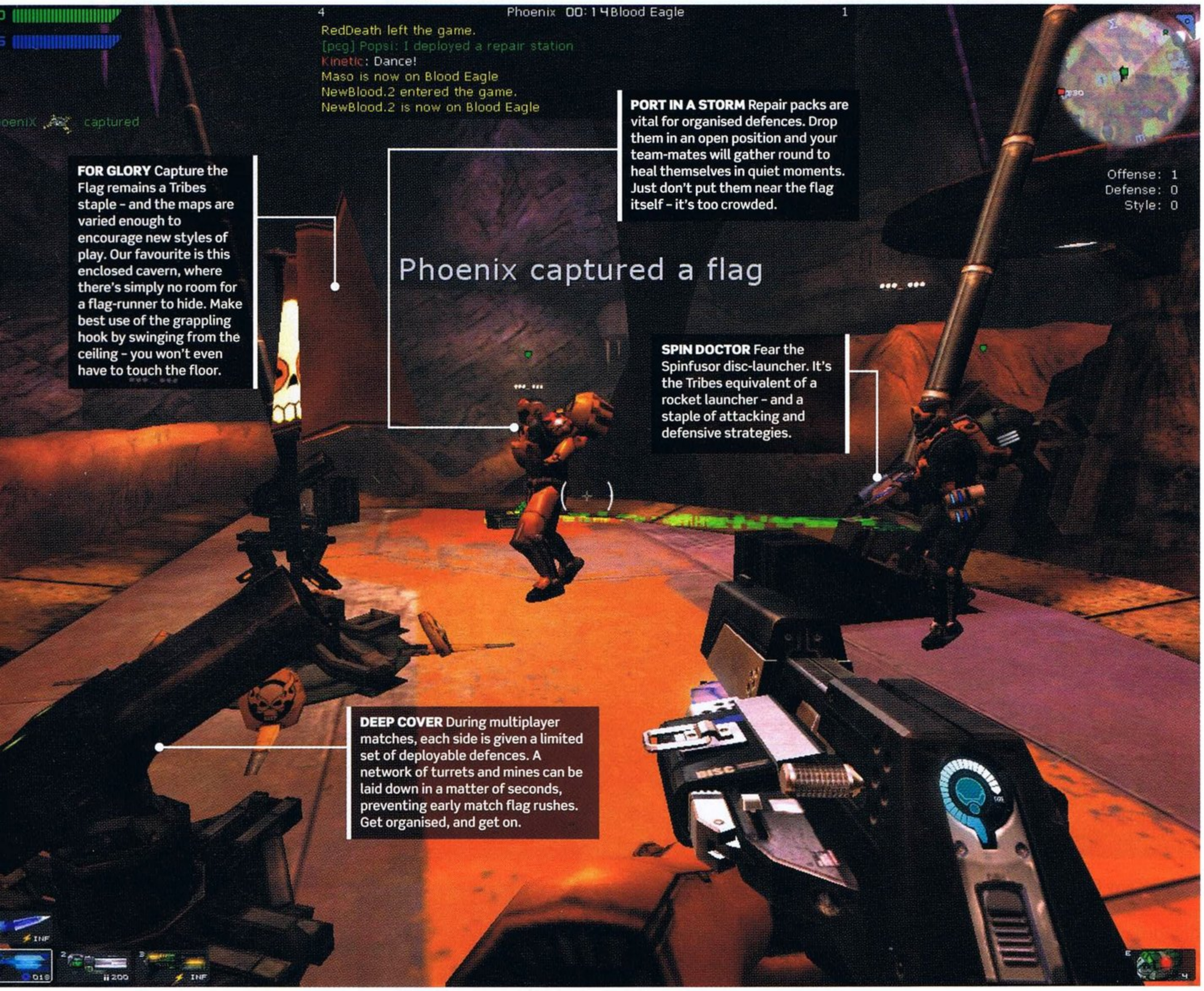
DANIEL has it all. Roguish good looks, well-groomed hair and a square jaw. It's no wonder the girls swoon on his approach.

This spoilt princess, **VICTORIA,** is being forced into an arranged marriage. She must fend for herself when the Tribals attack.

Driven, passionate and a little bit mad, **JULIA** still holds a grudge against the Tribes for deeds past.

Daniel's grumpy sidekick, **JERICHO** is handy with armour, mortar launchers, and sardonic responses to questions of honour.

"Patch me up, Doc..."


4 Phoenix 00:14 Blood Eagle 1
RedDeath left the game.
[pcg] Popsi: I deployed a repair station
Kinetic: Dance!
Maso is now on Blood Eagle
NewBlood.2 entered the game.
NewBlood.2 is now on Blood Eagle
Phoenix captured a flag
Offense: 1
Defense: 0
Style: 0
FOR GLORY Capture the Flag remains a Tribes staple - and the maps are varied enough to encourage new styles of play. Our favourite is this enclosed cavern, where there's simply no room for a flag-runner to hide. Make best use of the grappling hook by swinging from the ceiling - you won't even have to touch the floor.
PORT IN A STORM Repair packs are vital for organised defences. Drop them in an open position and your team-mates will gather round to heal themselves in quiet moments. Just don't put them near the flag itself - it's too crowded.
SPIN DOCTOR Fear the Spinfusor disc-launcher. It's the Tribes equivalent of a rocket launcher - and a staple of attacking and defensive strategies.
DEEP COVER During multiplayer matches, each side is given a limited set of deployable defences. A network of turrets and mines can be laid down in a matter of seconds, preventing early match flag rushes. Get organised, and get on.

Fundamental to the massive difference in difficulty is this: only one weapon, the sniper rifle, impacts at the very same moment that you stab the trigger. The rest take a few seconds to reach their target, so you're forced to make a prediction (that is to say, best guess) of where they're going to be in three seconds – in the air, in the sky, in the soup. This is an entirely new, thrilling skill to learn. Firing a snap-spinfusor shot and watching it curve into the face of a enemy duellist is a superb feeling, one that all gamers should experience.

And that's just to begin. The opportunities inherent within this game for skilful, frenzied play for experienced gamers are limitless. You want to ski past a defensive post, turn sideways, and let off a couple of close-range shotgun blasts against a heavily armoured defender? Fine. If you have the skill, do it. Want to snipe turret-gunners as they track incoming flag-runners? Go ahead. Want to take out buzzing fighter pilots, yet leave their craft intact? Maybe you could hit the jets and fly straight upwards to rescue the ship from its mid-air death-spiral? Sure. That's absolutely fine. All that stands in your way is the skill-set. Put it this way: are you good enough?

He barrels forth Wile E Coyote-style

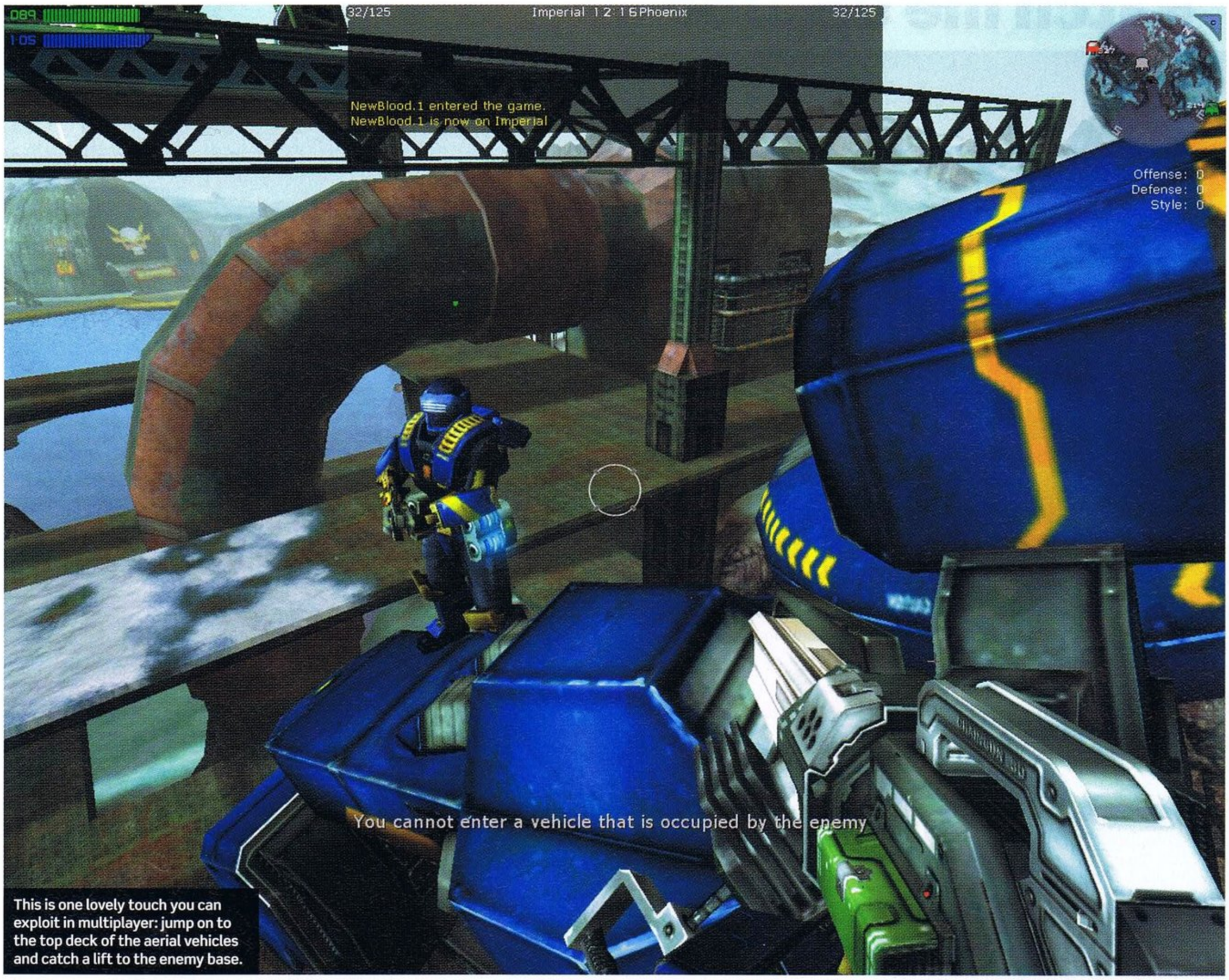
Here's the really clever bit: all these skills are exploited, not only in an online match, but during a beautifully judged, perfectly pitched, story-driven singleplayer game. These skills matter, because you're absorbed not in a fruitless, unremitting multiplayer battle, but in a *story*.

Yes, the rumours are true. *Tribes* has grown a heart.

The singleplayer starts slowly, allowing certain conceits to settle into your mind. You meet a snooty Imperial princess, by playing as her. Her first introduction to a jetpack is your first introduction – your ship is under attack by Tribal warriors, seeking revenge for banishment from the Empire, and you need to reach some form of safety. Suddenly you switch sides, and begin employment by the Tribals, fending off assaults from rival factions. Then, we/you/they/ the story moves forward 20 years, to the perspective of a new character, during the final stages of an (unreal) tournament – Empire versus Tribals. Play shifts back and forward, gradually revealing the shape of the world, the over-arching story, the characters, their relationships… I'm being deliberately cagey about this, since part of the thrill lies in discovery and realisation. Do yourself a favour: don't search for spoilers, hints, or extra information. Just let this game play you.

Yet from its opening segments you could mistake this for any other first-person shooter. Tight corridors, stupid soldiers, cramped locations… it doesn't ▶

TRIBES: VENGEANCE



This is one lovely touch you can exploit in multiplayer: jump on to the top deck of the aerial vehicles and catch a lift to the enemy base.

do itself any favours. The supposed dramatic opening, a doomed mothership, is a mis-step; the scripted explosions and repeated ambushes feel strained. *Tribes* can't match the level of intensity of *Half-Life* or *Doom*. In comparison, it seems almost primitive. The tournament that follows is a similar disappointment, missing the intensity and high drama of an online battle on a public server. There are imaginative scenarios (this is the first time we've ever taken the role of a nine-year-old, for instance) but you'd be forgiven for giving up right there.

Then it happens: everything slots into place. You've got past the difficulties inherent in mortar-style weaponry – you've developed a sixth sense, an unholy understanding of trigonometry. You're no longer being introduced to the elements and equipment, you're playing at their fringes. Then, you realise: this is brilliant. An example, then:

The hills and valleys make for some perfect skiing. Use your momentum to carry you back up, firing the jets in short bursts.

mid-way through the game you step into the metallic boots and kryptonite pants of an assassin droid. The overall objective is simple: assassinate *(a leading character* – Rampant Spoiler Ed). To do that you need to gain access to an underground base – and to do that, you need to infect specific sub-systems, the turrets, sensors and re-armament pads with a computer virus. How you go about this is entirely fluid, but each sub-quest offers certain benefits. Co-opt the defensive turrets, and you can fend off an army of jump-tanks. Bring the re-armament pads to heel, and you'll be granted access to safe havens. Tackle the sensors first, and the position of every enemy soldier on the field of play will be revealed. So, you make a decision.

You go for the re-armaments. But then, how do you do it? In all honesty, you're pretty weak and you'll be hard pressed to make it past the machineguns and flamer turrets on your own. So maybe you could approach from the south, away from the defences, with a sniper rifle… but of course, the sniper rifle uses the same energy source as your jetpack, and if you miss the target, you will be completely exposed, with half the enemy army using you for mortar practice. Perhaps you could gain an advantage by stealing a rocket pod, tacking from out of the sky. Or, you could for go the defences and common sense and just leap, leap high, over and through the defences, to the objective. Quick

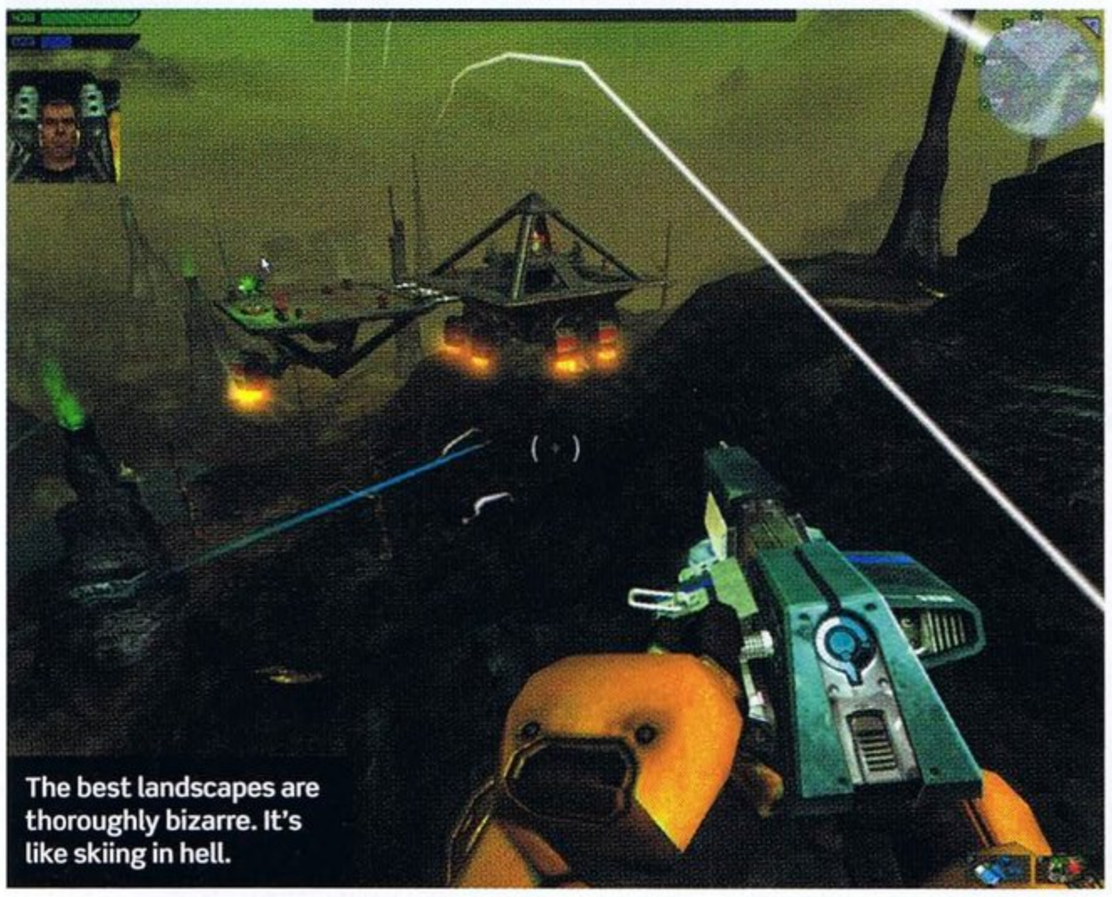
A dedicated follower of fashionable exoskeletons

As any aspiring duellist understands, picking the right exoskeleton for a conflict is a serious business

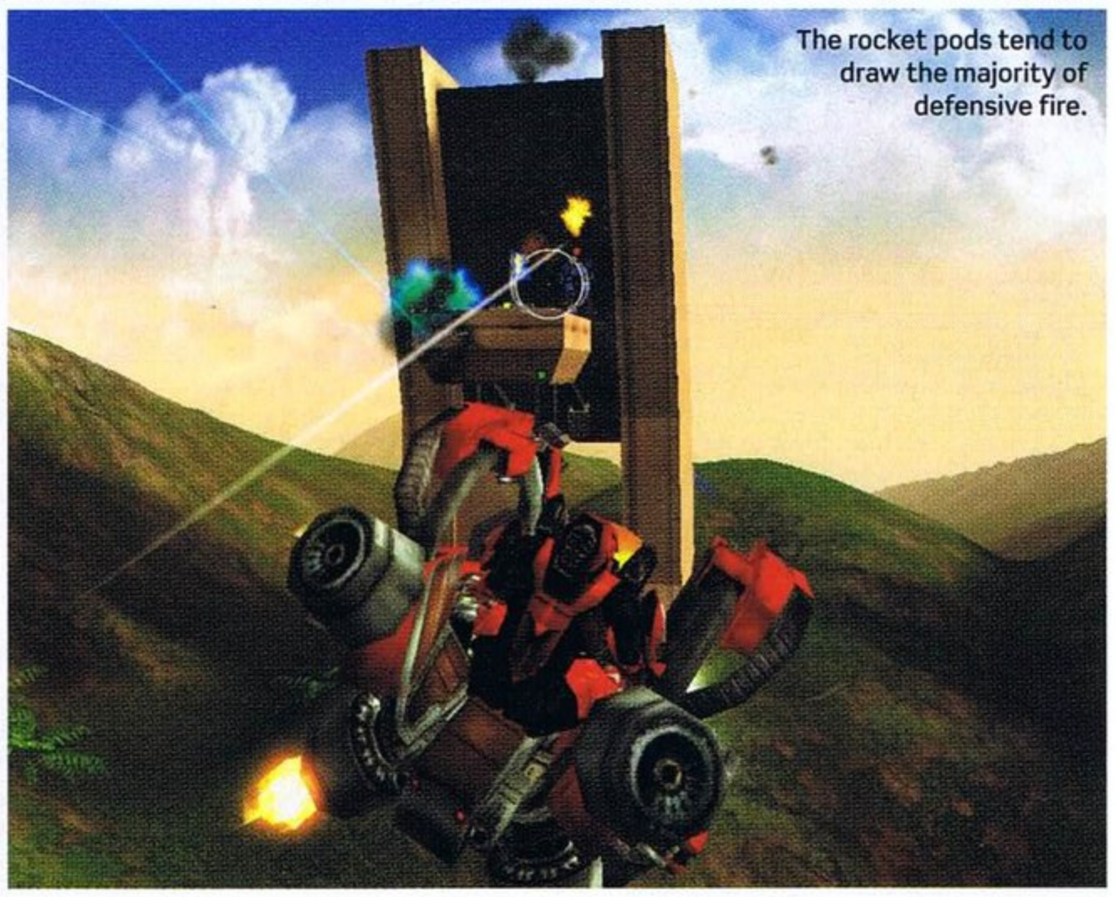
Flag-runners should always opt for the light armour. That way, they can flit in and out of enemy bases before the guards have a chance to react. Sniper rifles and vibro-blades are the armaments of choice, while a healthy stock of grenades should slow any pursuers.

Jack of all trades, master of... all traders. Freelancers and beginners should stick with the medium armour, complete with a rocket-pod launcher, shotgun and spinfusor. That way, they can drive any vehicle, take on any role, without sacrificing hit-points.

One for the big boys. It might be ponderous, but the heavy armour is the only way you're going to wield the Mortar, Flamer, Shotgun and Machinegun at the same time. The jets may barely lift you off the ground, but who cares? You're a walking nightmare. Be feared.



The best landscapes are thoroughly bizarre. It's like skiing in hell.



The rocket pods tend to draw the majority of defensive fire.

in, quick out, shake it all about, so to speak.

Another example: you're asked to pilot a stolen buggy from one end of a derelict city to another. Between fending off tribal scavengers, you soon realise, this really is a city. You can hover up, get on the rooftops, spot for ambushes, draw them out. If you're really clever, you'll lure them back to the buggy, and let your gunner take them out with a pop-pop flak cannon.

Suddenly, it feels like you're using your skill to accomplish something. The game, and the story embedded within, has become a playground, a place for you to take a measure of pride in the methods you employ. Yet at the same time as being fundamentally *playable* it's letting you experience a thrilling space opera from every side. It's an odd sensation: when you're playing, you can't wait for the next cut-scene, the next plot-point. When you're watching, you can't wait to get back out there, to skip the high drama and get on with the killing. And in the very same package, you're given a stylish online shooter.

A word about the online modes: they're excellent. The *Tribes* community is already complaining that the maps are too small, or that the game has been "dumbed down" or made newbie friendly. They're wrong (or at least self-centered); it's been made more accessible. There's a real difference. Yes, the number of tools has decreased, that's true. But the number of interactions between them is enormous. Key to this is the wonderful grappling hook. First, you use it to hang from the ceilings of the cavern map. Then you start getting tricky. Maybe hitching a lift on a friend's rocket-pod. Maybe using it to drag a flag-runner out of the sky. The maps are smaller than you'd expect – in some you can leap from one end to the other in a single extended bound, but that doesn't matter. There's exactly the same sense of grace that exists in the singleplayer, yet you're playing online, as a team. Co-ordinated battles are superb, and hugely involved: players hang back on defensive duty, dropping turrets and infrastructure, while the rest of the team move to offence. Flag-runners are the graceful heroes, but there's room for rocket-pod jocks, gunners, support roles... Tales from *Tribes* part three. Your correspondent has reached a high – a perfectly executed rescue attempt. Yet, in a single scene, the emotional core of the game kicks in – a simple act of heroism changes the mood. He lets out a sigh – a mixture of professional admiration and outright surprise. This is much, much more than he ever expected.

Quick in, quick out, shake it all about, so to speak

TIM EDWARDS

PC GAMES ADDICT High flying action and high drama

IT'S › A fine yarn › Dynamic › Made in Australia

IT'S NOT › Grounded › Multiplayer only › Simply a shooter

Shazbot

88%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Sierra ■ **Developer** Irrational Games ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Online, LAN ■ **Link** www.tribesvengeance.com ■ **Community** www.tribalwar.com ■ **Influenced by** Previous Tribes games ■ **Alternatively** UT2004, Tribes 2

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

All the fun of the fair. And the spreadsheet

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GAME ★★★★★

It's *Rollercoaster Tycoon*... with pirates.

Thumbnail Review

The very model of a modern major management game

- ☑ Big plunge
- ☑ Loop the loop
- ☑ Corkscrew
- ☒ Can't get this safety bar to move

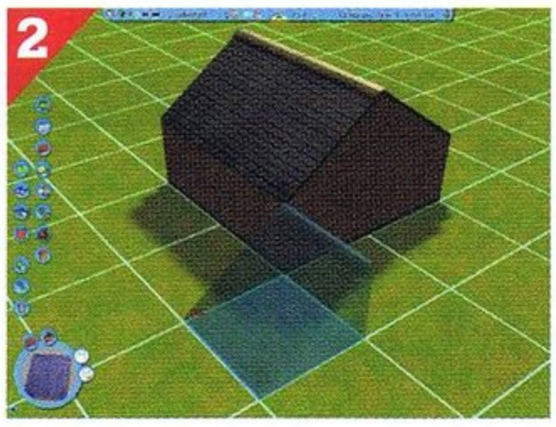
The most memorable management game since *Startopia*. Pretty, deep and beautiful.

A CUSTOM RIDE

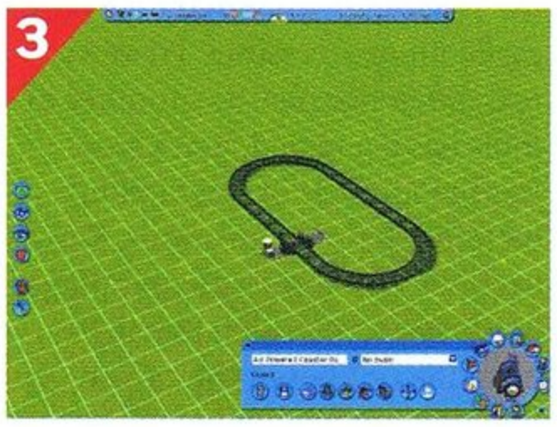
Tools to get a little more from your park

Roll up, roll up

Firstly and foremostly the scenario designer offers a way to design scenarios. No, really.

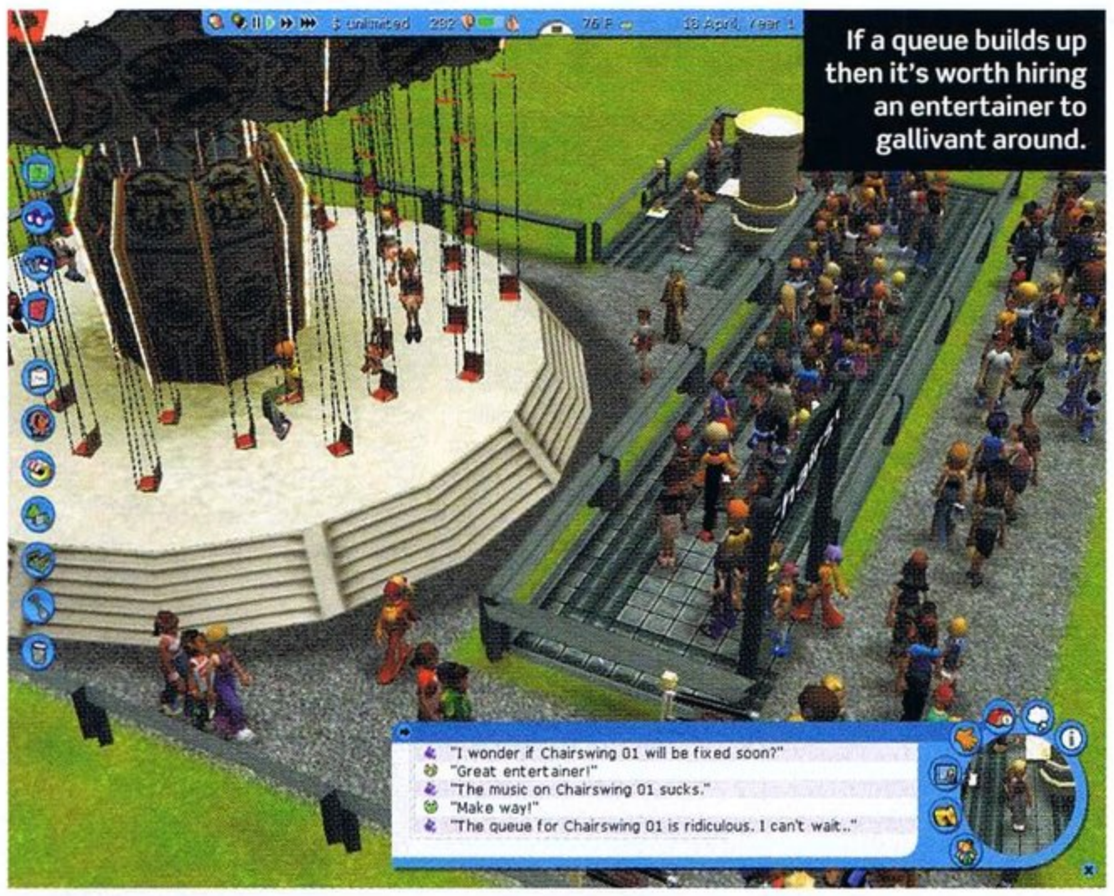


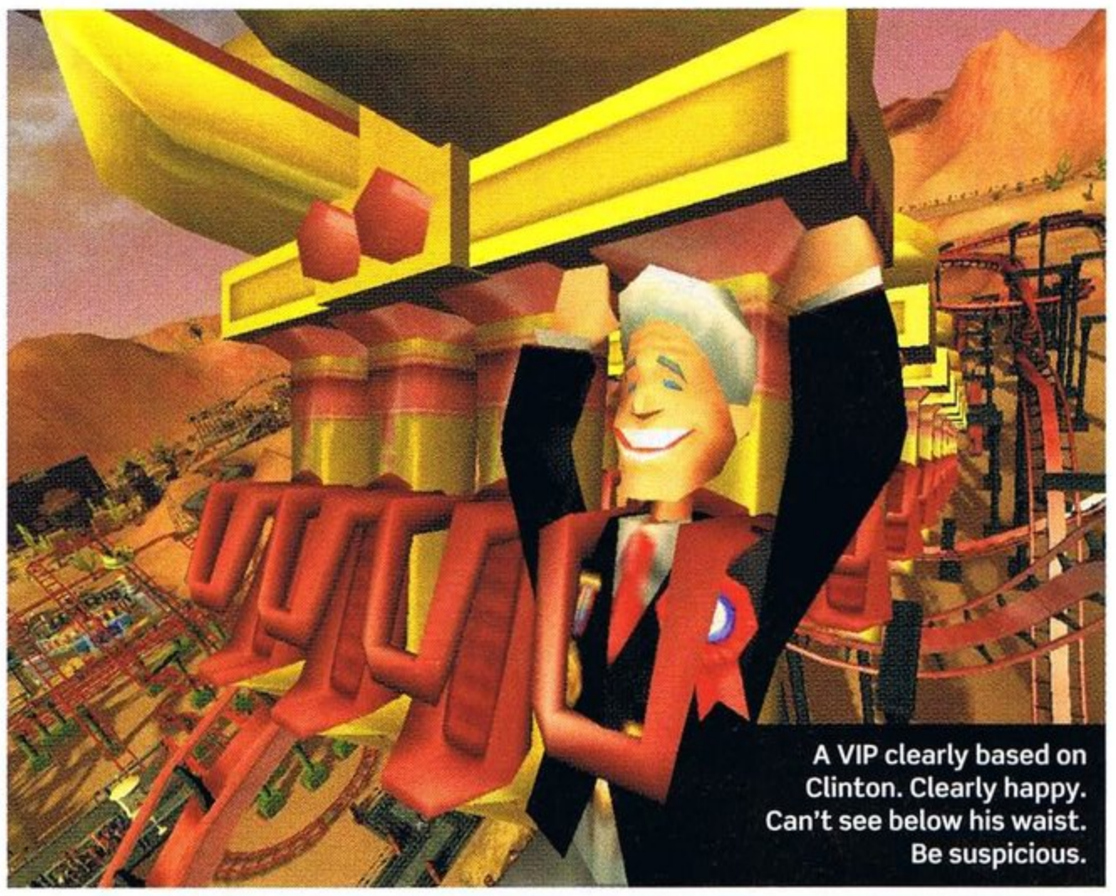
The building designer allows you to make and store custom items to make your park a bit more fancy.

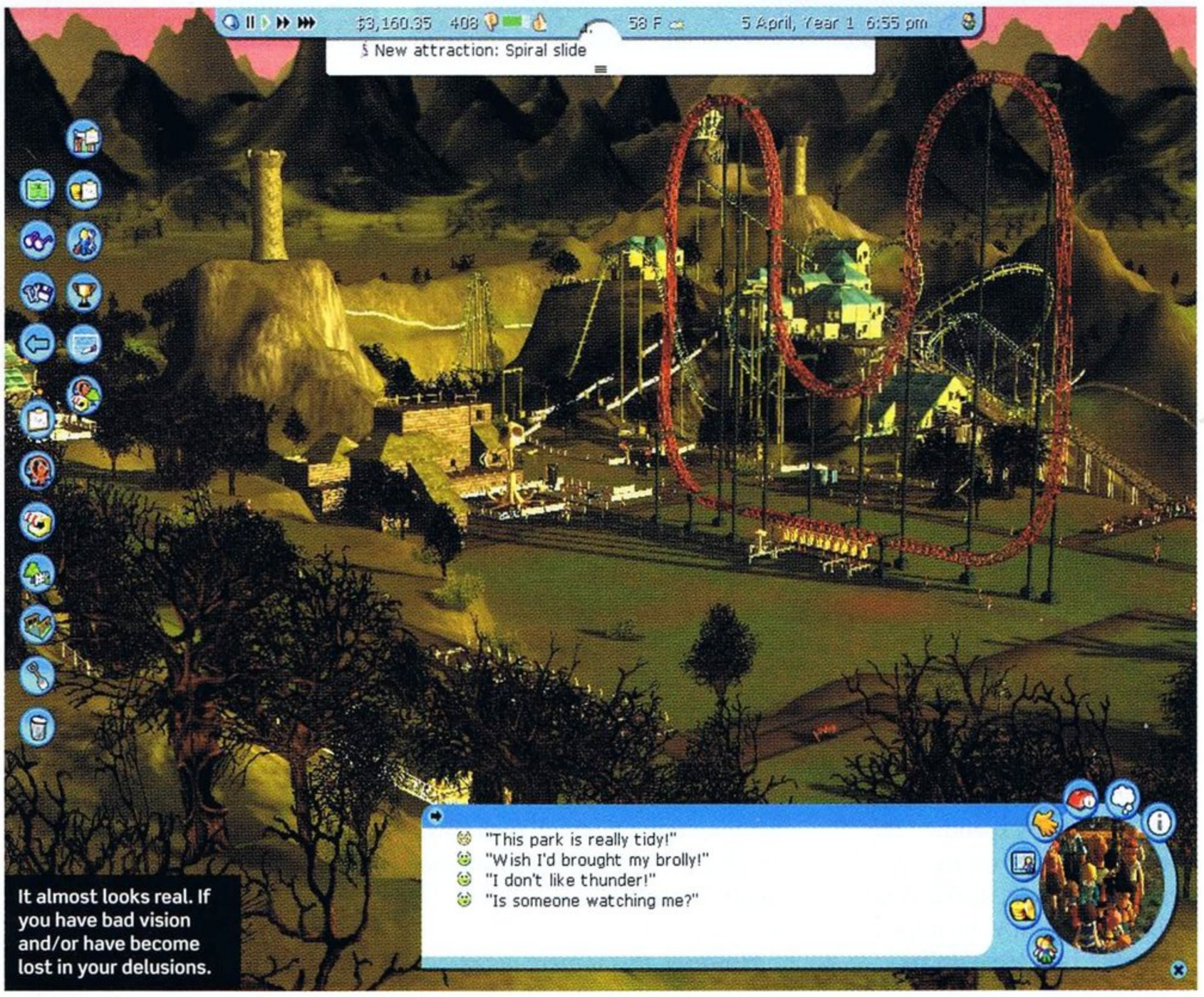


It's often sensible to make your rollercoasters in the freeform level then import them into your actual park.

The people designer lets you create and import instant facsimiles to your ideal holiday destination.


If a queue builds up then it's worth hiring an entertainer to gallivant around.
"I wonder if Chairswing 01 will be fixed soon?"
"Great entertainer!"
"The music on Chairswing 01 sucks."
"Make way!"
"The queue for Chairswing 01 is ridiculous. I can't wait.."


A VIP clearly based on Clinton. Clearly happy. Can't see below his waist. Be suspicious.


$3,160.35 408 58 F 5 April, Year 1 6:55 pm
New attraction: Spiral slide
"This park is really tidy!"
"Wish I'd brought my brolly!"
"I don't like thunder!"
"Is someone watching me?"
It almost looks real. If you have bad vision and/or have become lost in your delusions.

Next time you're stuck on a train, press your ear tightly against the window. If you close your eyes and concentrate, you'll be able to hear the forlorn, depressed mumble: "I wish I was a rollercoaster". Rollercoasters are the state to which all other railed transport aspires: railed transport gone completely off the rails. As John Walker is to other budget videogame reviewers, so is rollercoaster to the pedestrian coal-and-people lugging train.

Which makes it fitting that while Chris Sawyer's *Transport Tycoon* was a firm success, it took *Rollercoaster Tycoon*'s amusement park management to climb the inclinator to enormo-cash. While its sales successes – especially in the US – may have been overshadowed by *The Sims*, it was the original PC-strategy mainstream cross-over hit with a library of add-on packs padding out the charts.

Not that its idea of managing an amusement park was in any way original – it borrowed heavily from *Theme Park* in the same way *Transport Tycoon* leant on Sid Meir's *Railroad Tycoon* – but it *was* the right game at the right time with (the important bit) the right execution. Friendly enough to get into, it offered an intricate, pretty world which people could lose themselves in. Most crucially, it was a mixture of creative expression structured around the hard, tough decisions required to run a theme park. The right side of the brain deals with how this ramshackle place of yours will turn a profit; the left-hand side worries about getting all the novelty cowboy statues to arrange correctly. This combination made *Rollercoaster Tycoon* the definitive late '90s example of its genre, and while it borrowed from certain precursors, that's nothing compared to how many games openly stole from it.

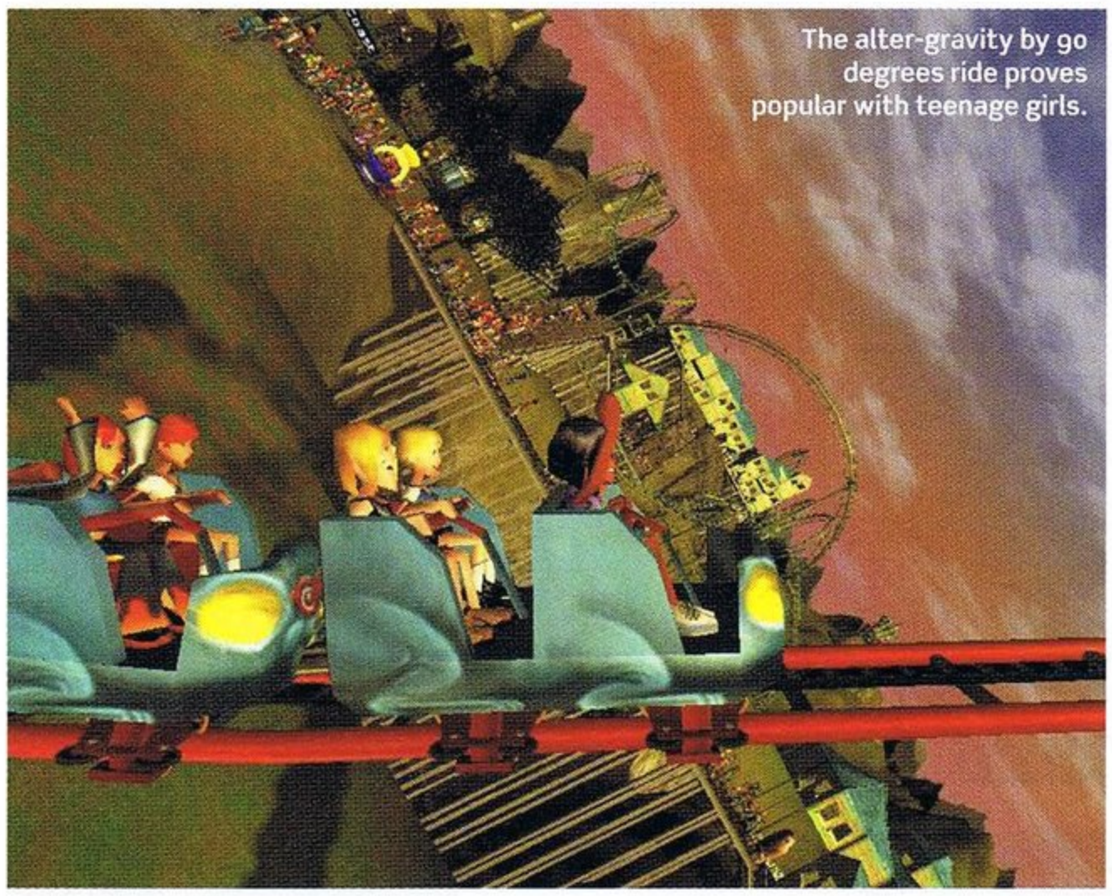
So – fast forward to 2004 and we have a 'real' sequel instead of *RC2*'s simple refit, but with Chris facing a dilemma. *Rollercoaster Tycoon* was an absolute product of its time, genuinely template-defining. If it *was* the right game at the right time then, *now isn't that time any more*. Traditional management games have felt uninspired for a couple of years. Take Chris Sawyer's recent contemporary, *Locomotion*: solid enough but distinctly underwhelming with the same old failings. You know: the obscuring nature of the isometric view, the imprecision of the building tools and the sterile artificial world that results from your best efforts.

...it was the right game at the right time

Now you understand why *Rollercoaster Tycoon was* great, why it just won't do *any more* and that modernising the classical management game has been baffling the better minds for the best part of a decade. But the good news is – they've only gone and done it. This is the first 3D management game that has ever had the sense of complexity and solidity that the best sprite-based graphics games have had, while using the possibilities of 3D to alleviate old problems and distract us from the remaining ones with a whole fun-park of joys. It's a modern game, made from whole cloth, and admirable. It may even have made *Rollercoaster Tycoon* the right game at the right time again.

The basics of play remain the same, however, in the same way that *Doom 3* wouldn't be *Doom* if there wasn't a gun pointing out the bottom of the screen towards something demonic and ugly ▶

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3



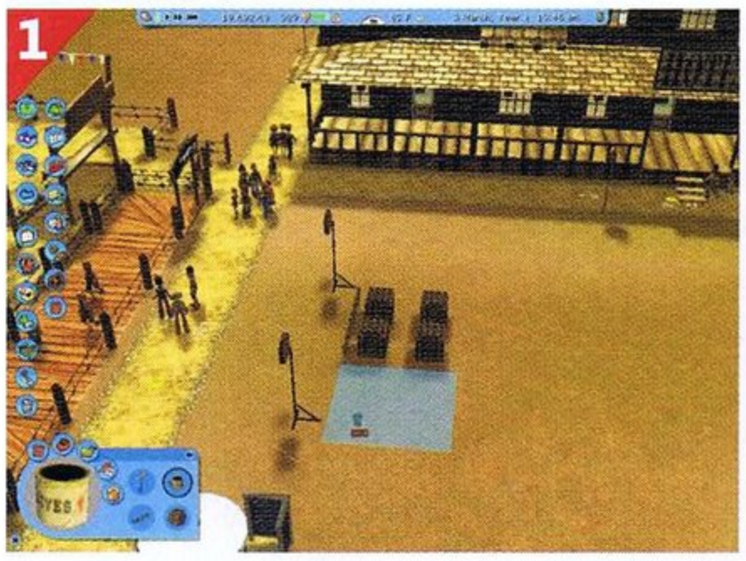
The alter-gravity by 90 degrees ride proves popular with teenage girls.

The engine's lightning effects add considerable atmosphere to the spookier themes.

FIRE BALLS

I've been wrong/Now the fireworks in me are all gone

So it's lucky there's plenty available in *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* then...



Fireworks are essentially a period decoration for your park. They're based upon placing mortars and Catherine wheel posts in the specified areas. They can be triggered to fire on a timetable.

Well... after you've actually designed a display, which is very much the artful part. It operates a little like a music sequencing program, with you applying the fireworks to the available channels.

Oooh! Ahh! And other traditional firework-based verbal emissions. Fireworks burn money, literally – but can be good for providing your visitors with a little bit of glittering magic.

wobbling in your direction. You're presented with a plot of land and a pile of cash. By spending the latter, you have to create a park which will amuse, distract and (most importantly) be hugely profitable, by setting up an infrastructure of shops, information services, workers, decorations and the all-important rides themselves. Tactics are based around different elements of the public's demographics being entertained by different things, so make some tranquil scenic rides for the more sedentary personalities. Create a triple-loop inverted rollercoaster guaranteed to push all your internal organs external for the ADD-types.

If you were to generalise, the simulation seems to be based less around brute malicious corporate practice. There's none of *Theme Park*'s malicious adding extra salt to the cheap fries to make people thirsty, then selling them over-priced drinks, for example.

Instead, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* takes a more positive reinforcement method, with you deciding to add extra garnishes to your foodstuffs to make them more attractive.

However, this is mere detail. The centrepieces of play remain identical. And *Rollercoaster Tycoon*'s centrepieces have always been the rollercoasters themselves. While most rides, such as dodgems or big wheels, simply involve placing a pre-designed object on the map, these tracked monsters are individually constructed, with the player working out where they want each bend, dip, or curve to go. With many different designs available the creation of a good 'coaster is both an art and a science. And hard science at that – the first few you make will probably produce G-forces that would turn a human into red pulp were anyone actually stupid enough to go on them, normally 'coasters with huge 'intensity' and 'nausea' ratings and tiny 'entertainment' ones.

...a giant oil well spurts black gold into the sky

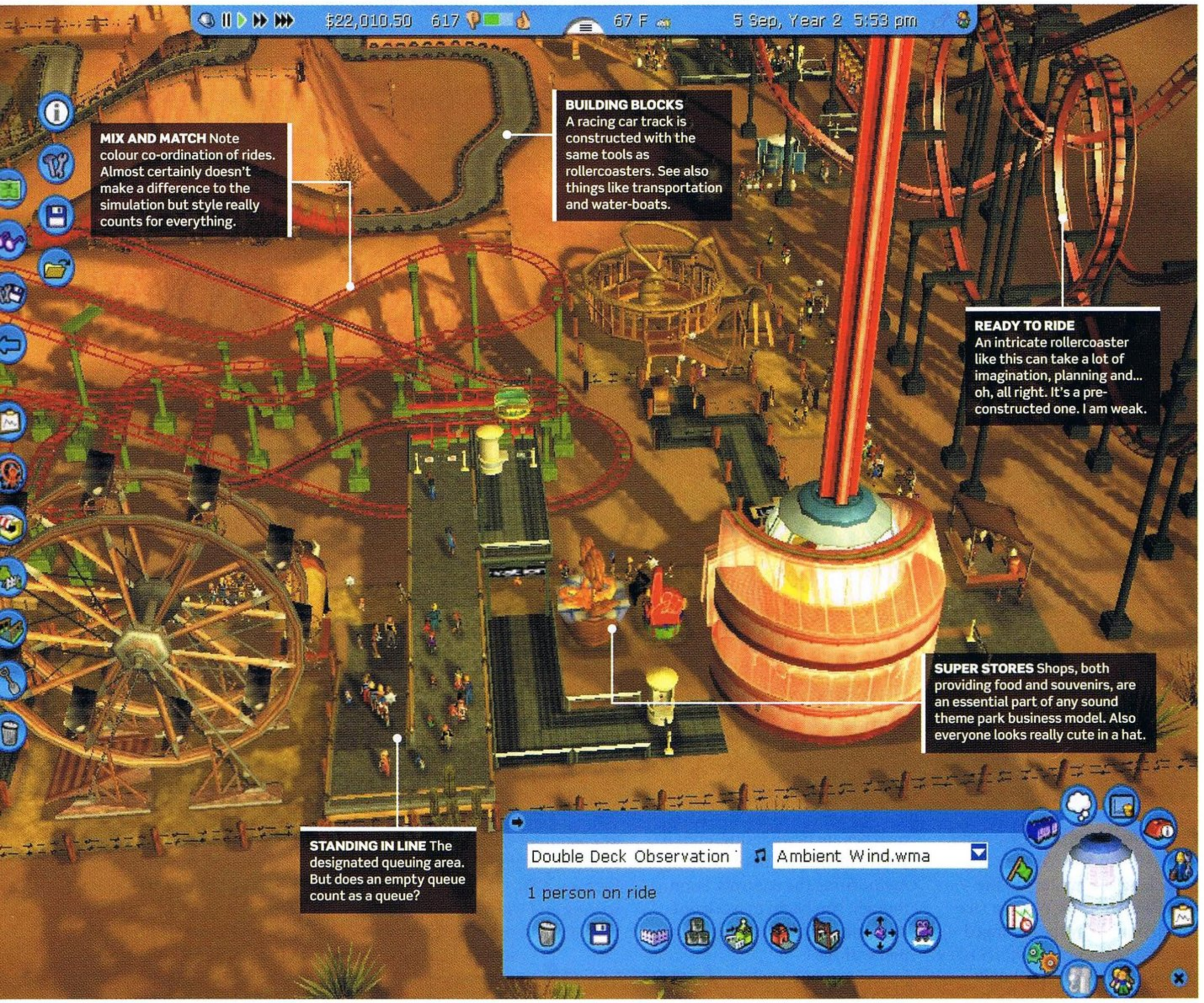
You'll eventually learn to tilt the track to take the nasty edge off a hard turn, or apply breaks or just not have a drop of several hundred feet... and until then, there's always the option to use one of the pre-built coasters (or even import old ones from earlier *Rollercoaster Tycoon* games). Other interesting new options include timed decorations, such as having a giant oil-well set to spurt black-gold into the sky whenever a train passes a certain point and the 'auto-finish' option, which tries to find a link between the ends of your unfinished 'coaster – a useful tool for inexperienced or lazy designers.

And you need all the help you can get. For a game as sophisticated as *Rollercoaster Tycoon* the training sequences aren't quite elaborate enough. It's excellent at teaching you to control things, but not at explaining what you should be *doing* – the equivalent of a driving instructor who'll teach you all the accelerate, break and clutch stuff but fail to elaborate on the Highway Code. You'll find yourself doing the *Rollercoaster Tycoon* equivalent of driving on the right-hand-side of the road before experience teaches you where you're going wrong.

It's lucky that the main campaign game's structure is so exquisitely poised to allow you to do so. A selection of levels are provided – complete a few and you'll unlock some more – which means there's a choice of missions to select from for most of the game, enabling you to skip

TAKEN APART

"Scream if you want to grow faster"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MIX AND MATCH Note colour co-ordination of rides. Almost certainly doesn't make a difference to the simulation but style really counts for everything.
BUILDING BLOCKS A racing car track is constructed with the same tools as rollercoasters. See also things like transportation and water-boats.
READY TO RIDE An intricate rollercoaster like this can take a lot of imagination, planning and... oh, all right. It's a pre-constructed one. I am weak.
SUPER STORES Shops, both providing food and souvenirs, are an essential part of any sound theme park business model. Also everyone looks really cute in a hat.
STANDING IN LINE The designated queuing area. But does an empty queue count as a queue?
Double Deck Observation
Ambient Wind.wma
1 person on ride

around if you get stuck. Most, especially the early ones, are designed to challenge a specific area of park management, with three increasingly difficult sets of objectives. Apprentice can normally be achieved upon grasping the 'idea' of what the level is trying to teach you – but getting Entrepreneur or Tycoon objectives requires a far better grasp of the game.

There'll always be a subset who have no interest in such challenges and just want to construct a beautiful park. In which case, a full, unlimited-cash sandbox mode is available to push the toys around in to see how far they can go. In terms of pure creativity, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3* dwarfs its predecessors. Land can be deformed organically to create any conceivable mountain, plateau or chasm. Stand-alone decorative buildings can be made to create visual stand-ins. The rides themselves can be customised in all the usual colours – and you can even add your own music.

G-forces that would turn you into pulp

You may think, if you've played *Theme Park World*, that you've seen a 3D game like this before. No. You really haven't. That was nothing compared to the bustling, beautiful world which *Rollercoaster Tycoon* presents. If you don't feel a swell of pride rise up inside when you lean back to survey your creation... well, you may not belong to the same species as me.

Its real failings are small enough to brush over in a line – occasional framerate lags, placement problems and bits where the simulation seems obscure to the point of incomprehensibility. But when you turn to the on-ride camera mode, and the car starts down the big slides… well, I genuinely feel a tug of induced artificial vertigo. A construction game that gets you in the guts. That's rare. This is a golden ticket. Get in line.

KIERON GILLEN

PC GAMES ADDICT Rollercoaster... of love

IT'S › A 'real' sequel › Picturesque › Disneyworld minus sinister mice

IT'S NOT › For action fans › More fool them › All downhill

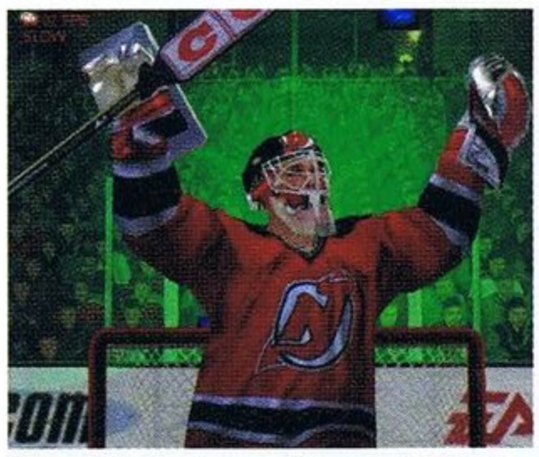
Fearsome

88%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Frontier Developments ■ **They say** 733MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 300Mb HD, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.3GHz CPU, 384Mb RAM, 64Mb ■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.rollercoastertycoon.com ■ **Community** www.rct2.com ■ **Influenced by** Theme Park, Rollercoaster Tycoon ■ **Alternatively** Rollercoaster Tycoon

NHL 2005

Ice, ice baby... forever



(Above) Testosterone flows unchecked.

(Below) Tap buttons to win fights.

Look! It's *slightly* prettier than last year's version!

Endless emoting. Hollyoaks. Moisturiser. Women are largely a mystery to me – a bit like ice hockey. Why no face protection? Why the deranged organist? My only real-life hockey match was in Helsinki, but it might as well have been in St Helens for all that I followed the details (though the fights, among both players and crowd, were fairly straightforward). Finally, here's the point. I didn't need to understand it. Just like the fairer sex, I'm having fun without really knowing what's going on.

So I have no qualms about admitting I haven't played most of EA's several thousand *NHL* titles, though I made a point of checking up on what a 'deke' is (*A feint, you fool* – Ed) and the intricacies of icing and the offside rule. So don't let your own ignorance of the self-proclaimed fastest sport in the world put you off dipping a toe into *NHL*'s gaudy world. The first couple of matches are bewildering, even if you've made a point of memorising the controls. Soon, though, you begin to work out strategies. Goals I score are now met with, as I believe is traditional, 'the horns'; goals conceded are greeted with muttered unprintables. Yes: I, Ross Atherton, have begun to care about ice hockey, and in the grandly titled Dynasty Mode, the New Jersey Devils have a new manager.

A sense of satisfaction unchanged since *Pong*

We must once again admit that EA Sports have done a decent job of letting you get into the action quickly while also offering insane detail for obsessive fans of the sport – leagues from around the world, correct names and even Finnish arena announcements at Finnish matches. Having said that, I suspect most gamers would gladly sacrifice such eccentricities as a Scouting system in the career mode for a tutorial of any sort. Even so, *NHL* virgins will be scoring and winning games after just a few attempts on the easy setting. With this comes a primal sense of satisfaction that hasn't changed since *Pong*, even if EA's presentation and packaging are light-years on from the first time we defeated our digital adversaries.

Complaints? I have few. It's often hard to pick up which opposing player has the puck, since it appears as just a smudge of grey, and the sheer speed of the action doesn't help. It also seems that every review of *NHL* must point out the fact that the series moves on slowly, and far be it for me to break from tradition. This year's few additions are worth noting but if *2005* appeals to you, consider picking up last year's edition, the mysteriously titled *2004*, which is out on budget.

2005's Open Ice Control, which lets you receive the puck in space from your team-mates, four-player free-for-alls, a fictional World Cup and a few new moves won't be missed by newcomers but do offer just enough incentive for addicts to splash out on the latest version.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMES ADDICT More of the same icy-cool slickness

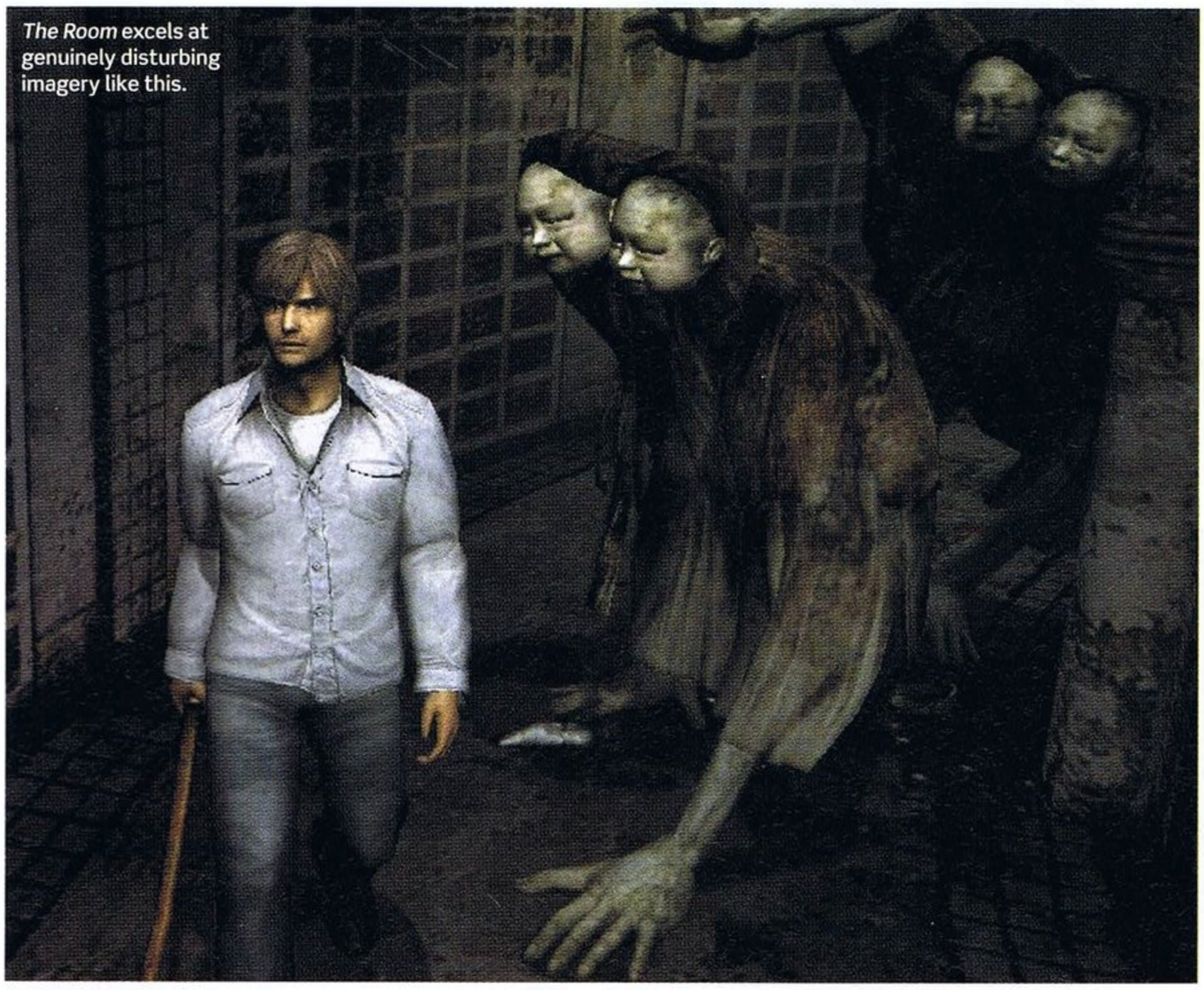
IT'S
› The 12th NHL › Deep
› Yet surprisingly easy to slip into

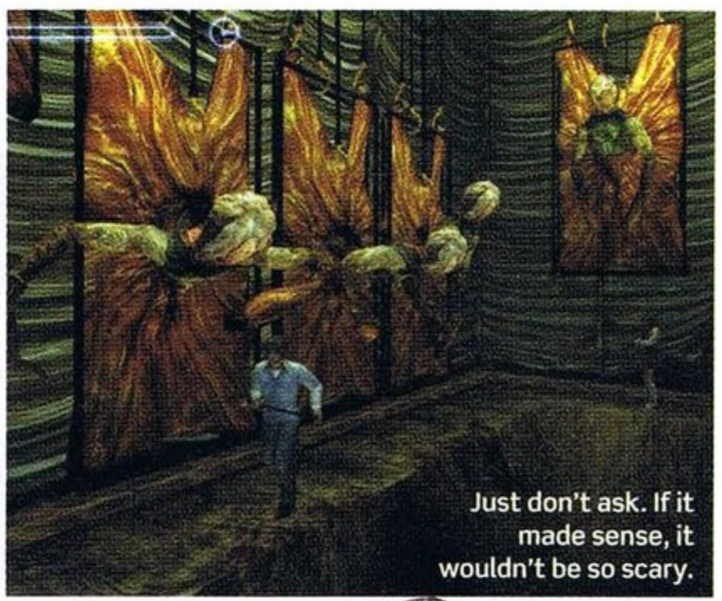
IT'S NOT
› Hot › Very different to 2003
› Necessary you understand it

Enticing

80%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Electronic Arts ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 700MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 1.5GHz, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, internet, one PC, up to four ■ **Link** www.easports.com ■ **Influenced by** Shouty men with no front teeth ■ **Alternatively** NHL 2004 on budget


The Room excels at genuinely disturbing imagery like this.


Just don't ask. If it made sense, it wouldn't be so scary.

He's coming out of the wall. Your bedroom wall.

SILENT HILL 4

#302 frnshd apt, 1 bdrm, all mod cons; would suit quiet, nervous type

The extradimensional gateway in my bathroom is getting bigger, but that's not what's worrying me. I can handle the places it takes me to. I can handle the grunting, misshapen creatures I find there. It's the normality I see outside my window that frightens me now.

Welcome to *Silent Hill 4: The Room*. Trapped in your own apartment, the only way out is to crawl down the long tunnel in your bathroom that leads to nightmare dimensions. You bludgeon the undead, you gather clues. Yet whatever you try, you always end up back in your bedroom when it's over.

Does that sound naggingly familiar? It ought to. Substitute a PC for the extradimensional gateway, and you've got the classic gaming experience in a nutshell. We travel to other worlds, we fight monsters. And when it's over, we're always back in our rooms, safe and sound. If it's a really addictive game, we may even find it hard to leave.

Here's the twist. What if the boundaries start to break down? What if that safely contained danger starts leaking into your everyday world?

I watched her from my apartment window. The traffic and the other pedestrians were all in a hurry, but she wasn't. She dawdled outside that subway entrance like she had an audience – then sashayed slowly down the steps, one at a time, and disappeared. After that, whenever I went through the tunnel, there was Cynthia. It was nice to have company. She always thought we were both in her dream. Right up until the moment she died in my arms. The next time I looked out of my window, there was an ambulance parked outside the subway entrance with a flashing light, and a man at the top of the steps trying not to be sick.

When it's not undermining your faith in reality, *The Room* likes to turn you into a voyeur. Your contact with the outside world is so circumscribed, you become obsessed with the few opportunities provided: the peephole in your door, the crack in the wall that lets you spy on your pretty, vulnerable, neighbour. The view from your rear window that's straight out of the Hitchcock film. The more unsettling the worlds you visit, the more strangely addictive these glimpses of normality become.

The Room likes to turn you into a voyeur

And unsettling those worlds are indeed. An abandoned subway station where leprous dog-things nose among the litter. A rooftop world of fire escapes and cooling towers. Plastic mannequins in worryingly lifelike poses. Surreal juxtapositions. Corruption. Decay. These debased, dreamlike reflections of real places get under your skin in a way that not even *Thief*'s Cradle can manage. And every time you return to your apartment, there's another sign that the wrongness is infiltrating your waking world.

The Room's console origins don't do these knowing, subtly disturbing ideas many favours. The controls are awkward, the quality of interaction stuck firmly in the era of late '90s PlayStation. But if the treatment is disappointingly formulaic, the frights are anything but.

It's not actually that hard for a game to scare people by making monsters jump out of dark places. *The Room* does something more difficult, and more adult. It gets inside your head. It gives you a genuine sense of unease. That's because it knows where you live.

TONY ELLIS

PC GAMES ADDICT Uneasy, adult, but clunkily delivered

IT'S ›Intelligent ›Clumsy ›Knowingly unsettling

IT'S NOT ›Reassuring ›For kids ›All about pixel shaders

Disquieting

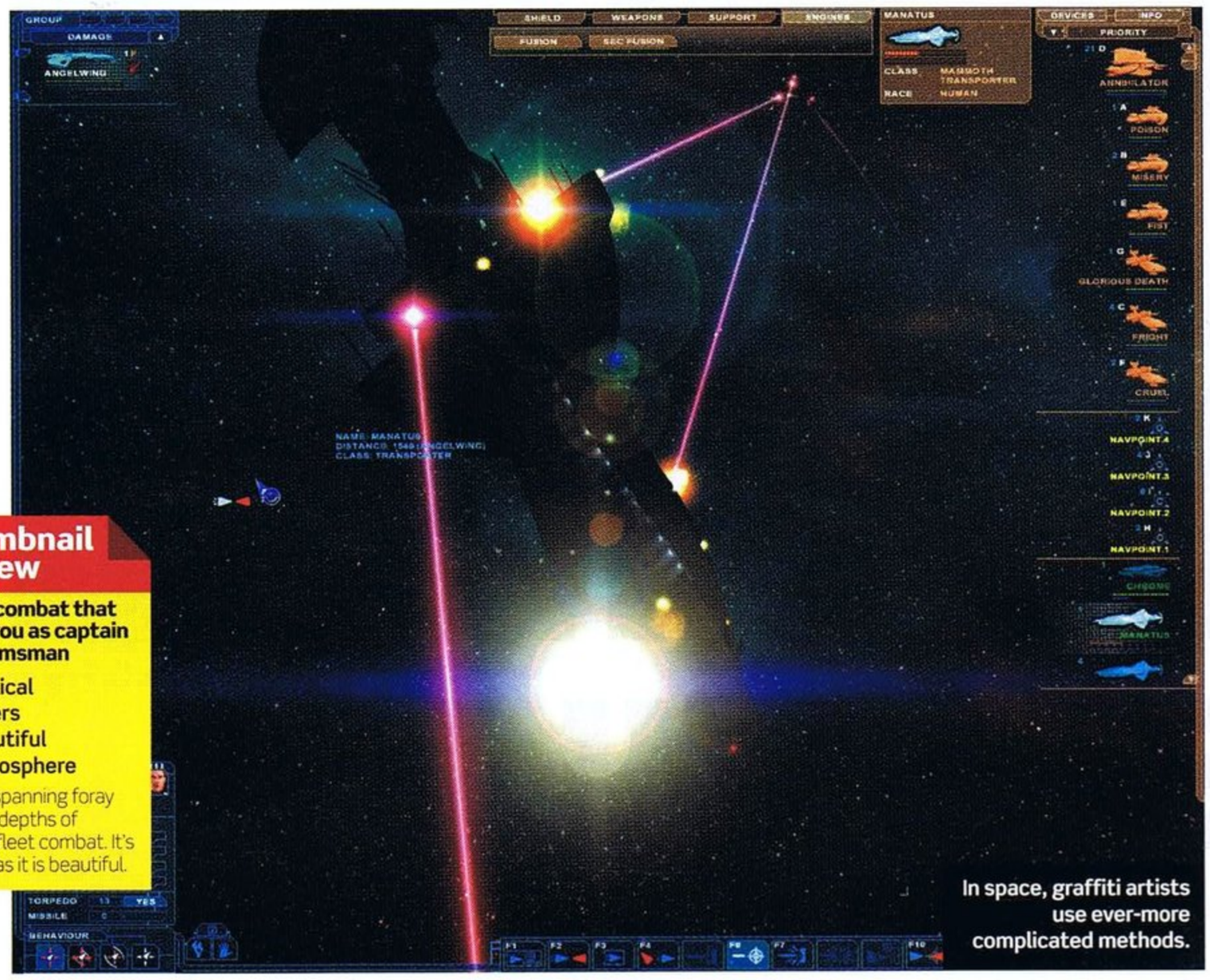
78%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Konami ■ **Developer** In-house ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card, DVD drive ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card, DVD drive ■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.konamityo.com/sh4 ■ **Influenced by** Eating cheese at bedtime, Clive Barker ■ **Alternatively** Silent Hill 3

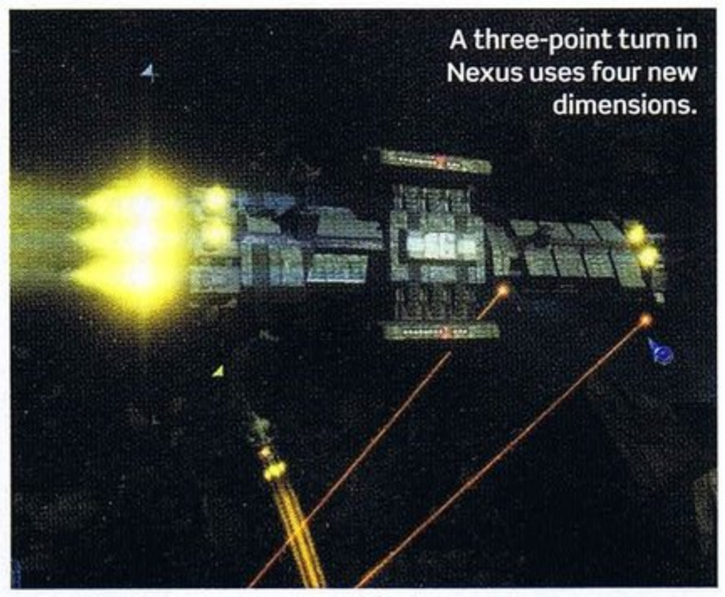
Review

NEXUS THE JUPITER INCIDENT

Warning: screenshots may cause drooling



In space, graffiti artists use ever-more complicated methods.



A three-point turn in Nexus uses four new dimensions.

The invisible strings prove difficult to remove.

Thumbnail Review

Space combat that casts you as captain not helmsman

- [x] Tactical
- [x] Lasers
- [x] Beautiful
- [x] Atmosphere

Galaxy-spanning foray into the depths of tactical fleet combat. It's as slow as it is beautiful.

Playing *Nexus: The Jupiter Incident* is like watching David Attenborough on the mating habits of elephants. It's epic, slow, and there's a lot of nudging. Sure, the same could be said of most space-bound RTS fare, but *Nexus* turns leisurely play into an artform.

By 2110, ungovernable fathoms of space will be full of ruthless corporations, rogue technology and mysterious alien artefacts, plus loads of hulking great warships. Enter you, or rather Marcus Cromwell, corporate space pilot and captain of the goodship Stiletto. A mysterious alien thing has been discovered near Jupiter, and you and a whole bunch of rival corporations are about to battle for possession.

There's a diverse set of missions, ranging from recon, assault and, surprisingly, stealth. But strategy lies in attacking the weak points of enemy ships, rather than in large-scale manoeuvres. You have less control over movement than in the *Homeworld* series, but more control over the workings of the ships. Battle decisions are taken more or less on a one-to-one basis between vessels and there's no need to worry about formations, just combat.

And engagements are won by going for the jugular. Every ship you fight has vulnerable elements. Shields, guns, and so on. Tactics focus on exploiting theirs while protecting yours. Are their lasers enough to trouble your shields? Do their shields need further punishment before you switch to your hull-ripping weapons?

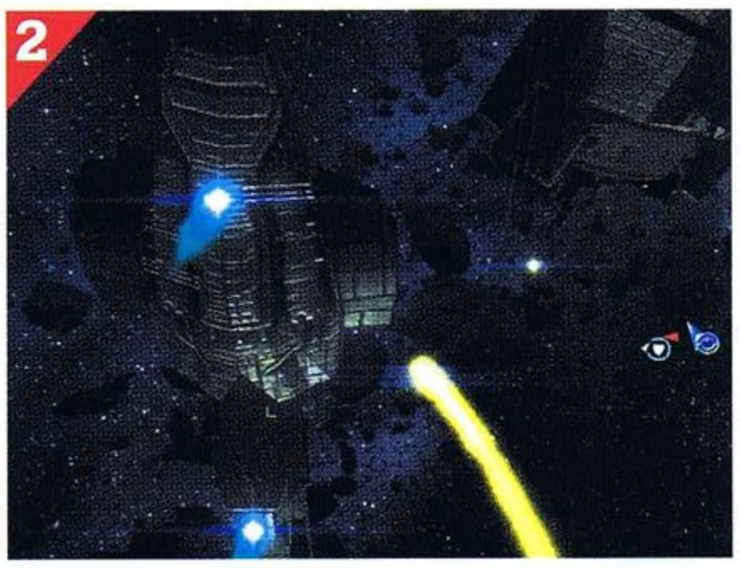
It's these make-or-break decisions that cause the sweat to slick the back of your neck. Inevitably, you're trying to make up your mind while the enemy lances hot death on your hull. There's no subtlety in their desire to rip the air from your lungs. So even if the fleets are gliding like

SUBTLETY!

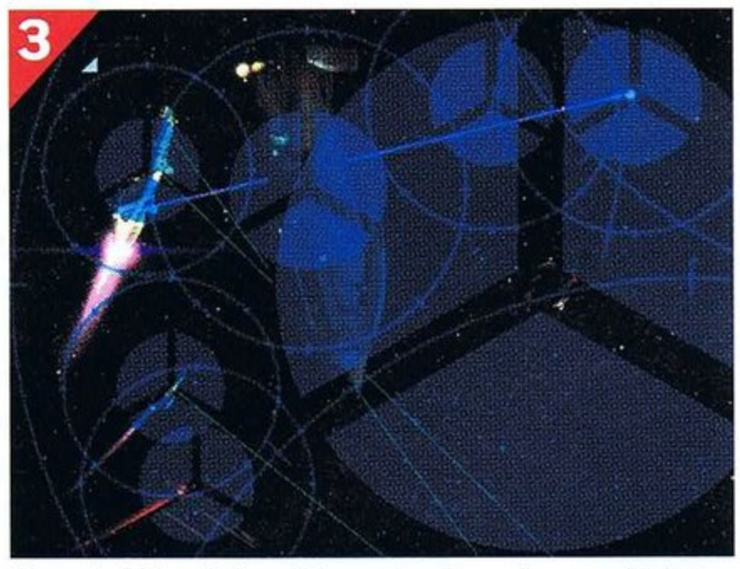
Life out on the frontier

With something so epic, the little touches may pass you by. Here are some of our favourite in-game moments

Watching the beams hitting their targeted spots. There's a lot of precision, to the point where if you're not correctly orientated, you won't be able to hit the target.



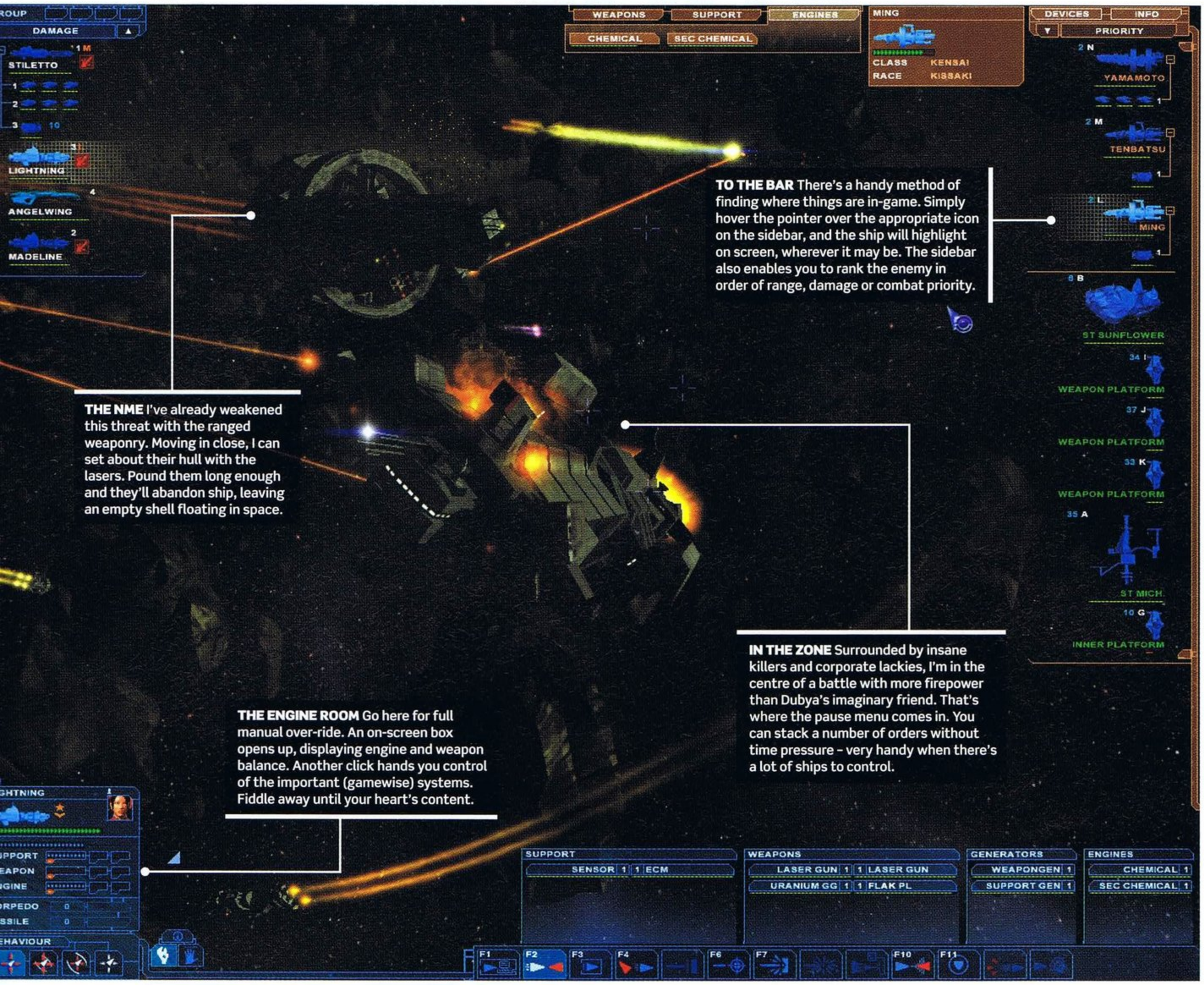
Launching smaller fighters cues tiny points of light to flutter from the hull. Fighters pick off missiles en-route to your hull and assault anyone coming too close.



These bubbles define distance by circumference. Match the distances by matching your bubble with another ship. Very pretty, but ultimately too cumbersome.

TAKEN APART

"Big ships eat the little ones..."



TO THE BAR There's a handy method of finding where things are in-game. Simply hover the pointer over the appropriate icon on the sidebar, and the ship will highlight on screen, wherever it may be. The sidebar also enables you to rank the enemy in order of range, damage or combat priority.

THE NME I've already weakened this threat with the ranged weaponry. Moving in close, I can set about their hull with the lasers. Pound them long enough and they'll abandon ship, leaving an empty shell floating in space.

IN THE ZONE Surrounded by insane killers and corporate lackies, I'm in the centre of a battle with more firepower than Dubya's imaginary friend. That's where the pause menu comes in. You can stack a number of orders without time pressure – very handy when there's a lot of ships to control.

THE ENGINE ROOM Go here for full manual over-ride. An on-screen box opens up, displaying engine and weapon balance. Another click hands you control of the important (gamewise) systems. Fiddle away until your heart's content.

whales and turning with all the vigour of Lara Croft after a doughnut binge, there's still a galaxy load of action to handle.

And *Nexus* is a showstopper when it comes to tearing the heavens open with photonic rays. Every ship is gorgeous, every weapon shines with neon intensity.

But it's not just a looker. Missions are free-form enough to accomodate different approaches. For instance, one mission requires you to carve through a group of hostile weapon platforms to reach a space station. En-route a distress call is broadcast by an abandoned tug. The scientists on the ship urge you to ignore it, your officers argue the other way. I took the moral decision to help the tug, despite mission priorities, and triggered a chain of events that neutralised the weapons platform for long enough to let me through. The other route is more perilous, but more action-packed.

> The enemy lances hot death on your hull

There's much to admire too in the poise between management and action. It's possible to play without ever popping the hood and working the engine. The game's AI takes care of the deeper running. But you can also have fun getting elbow-deep in grade epsilon engine oil. Prod around with engine to weapon ratios or set your own nav points etc.

But it's so slow, it's almost turn-based. The right side of tactical if you like; the wrong side of ponderous if you don't. At times it feels like you're watching rather than playing. The lack of direct control over ship movement frustrates. Having the gall to order your own nav points means suffering a fiddly interface that makes you drag a circle to set depth of field. It's also very easy to lose your bearings. The lack of a 3D map forces you to use the side panel to focus the camera on single ships. And, carrying on the tradition of *X2: The Threat*, the acting is abysmal. But none of this takes away from *Nexus*'s gritty strengths. Or it's big frickin' laser beams. Don't forget those.

CRAIG PEARSON

PC GAMES ADDICT Big, beautiful and compelling

IT'S › Sexy › Epic › Slooooooooooooow

IT'S NOT › Easy › Homeworld › For speed freaks

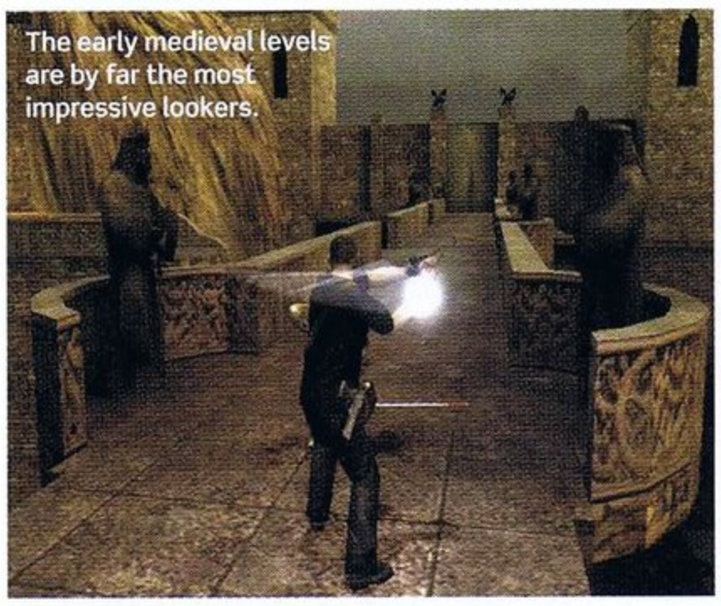
Connected

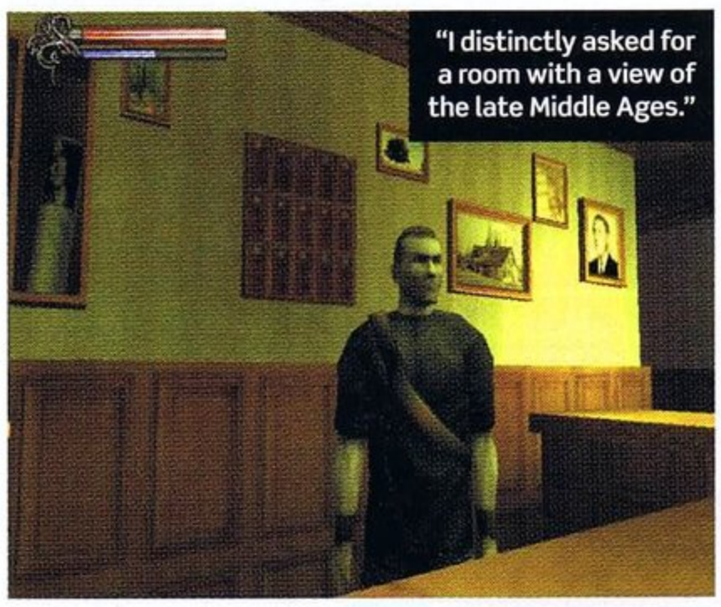
80%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Vivendi ■ **Developer** Mithis Entertainment ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 128Mb RAM ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet ■ **Link** www.nexusthegame.com ■ **Community** http://home.earthlink.net/~cgh5541 ■ **Influenced by** Homeworld 2 ■ **Alternatively** Imperium Galactica II

SHADE WRATH OF ANGELS

Take a trip into the shadow of a doubt


The early medieval levels are by far the most impressive lookers.


"I distinctly asked for a room with a view of the late Middle Ages."

Where *would* level designers be without sampled Egyptian wall friezes? Paying royalties, possibly.

Collectors always thrill at the discovery of glitched Bibles. 1820 saw the 'Large Family' volume, which accidentally switched 'cease' for 'cause', asking 'Shall I bring to the birth and not cease to bring forth?", while the Unrighteous Bible of 1653 asked "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit?" A letter here, a typo there. Easily done. Comedy emerges. Which brings us to what the press release called *Shade: Wrath of Angles*, an innovative geometric adventure game, in which an acute heroine must sally forth into a realm of sin (not to mention cos and tan), solving obtuse puzzles in a bid to...

Hah. If only. No, *Shade* is simply another world-spanning hack-and-slash 3D platformer, with little to separate it from the crowd. Monsters. Ancient gods. Lost treasure. Portals to the great beyond. *Wrath of Angels* has precisely one trick up its sleeve – the main character's ability to transform into a block-pushing, monster-cleaving demon – and a decent selection of levels that run from a medieval castle to Egyptian tombs and the green mists of the Shadowland. Beyond that, we've seen it all before, many times, and while the overall level design, feel and production values are solid enough, *Shade* quickly winds up tasting as flat as week old shandy.

Much of the blame for this goes to one of the fiddliest quests that we've ever stabbed our way through. Think water-torture with swords. When not killing you outright with clumsy movement controls and endless pits o' instant death, it delights in sapping your enthusiasm with repetitive object hunts that suck much of the inherent fun out of dodging traps and sword-fighting across battlements.

Shade has precisely one trick up its sleeve

Fetch quests are one thing, but *Shade* is an endless parade of getting the four pieces of this and the three pieces of that and the Sacred Artefact of something else (but not before you've collected the Four Essences from the Alchemist's Lab and collected the third part of the second Angel Heart and done the fabled Shopping of Coles and walked the Dog of Balatharam...). Your own character fares little better, often bitching about the level design on your behalf, and even mocking the monsters. His highly misjudged cry of "Oh, and here's another idiotic enemy. Hmm..." is destined to live on long after *Shade* itself is forgotten.

Sadly, it's only in these moments that the game shows any real personality. Scavenger hunt from Hell aside, *Shade* simply lacks the raw oomph of straight hack-and-slash action games like *Enclave*, the platforming goodness of *Prince of Persia*, or the intricate world-spanning plotlines of classics such as *Realms of the Haunting*. Again, it's not bad, and at times even manages to shine – but the majority of the action is ultimately uninspiring, and far too familiar for its own good. What a difference two transposed letters could have made...

RICHARD COBBETT

PC GAMES ADDICT Hack, Slash, Jump... Forever

IT'S › Big › Sprawling › The exact sum of its parts

IT'S NOT › Brash › Visceral › Going to bring light into your life

Sermonic

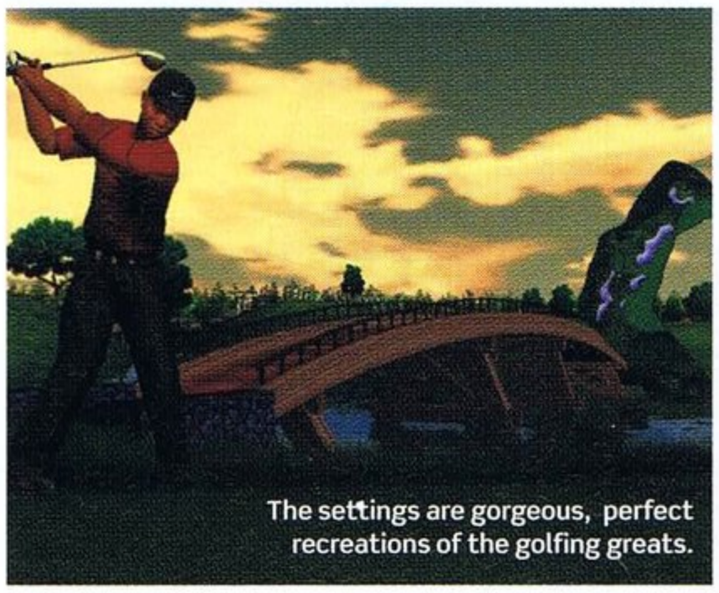
60%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Cenega ■ **Developer** Black Element Software ■ **They say** 700MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32MB 3D card ■ **We say** 2GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** None ■ **Link** www.shade-game.com ■ **Influenced by** Realms of the Haunting ■ **Alternatively** Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time & Warrior Within

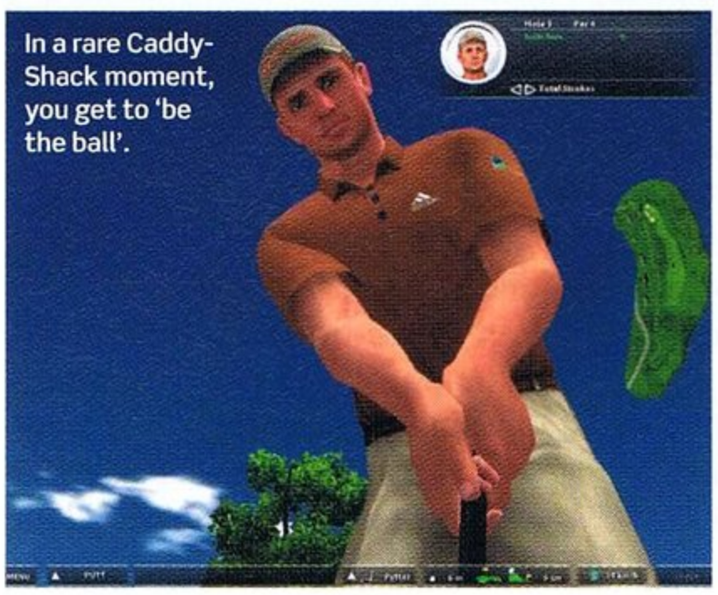
Review

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

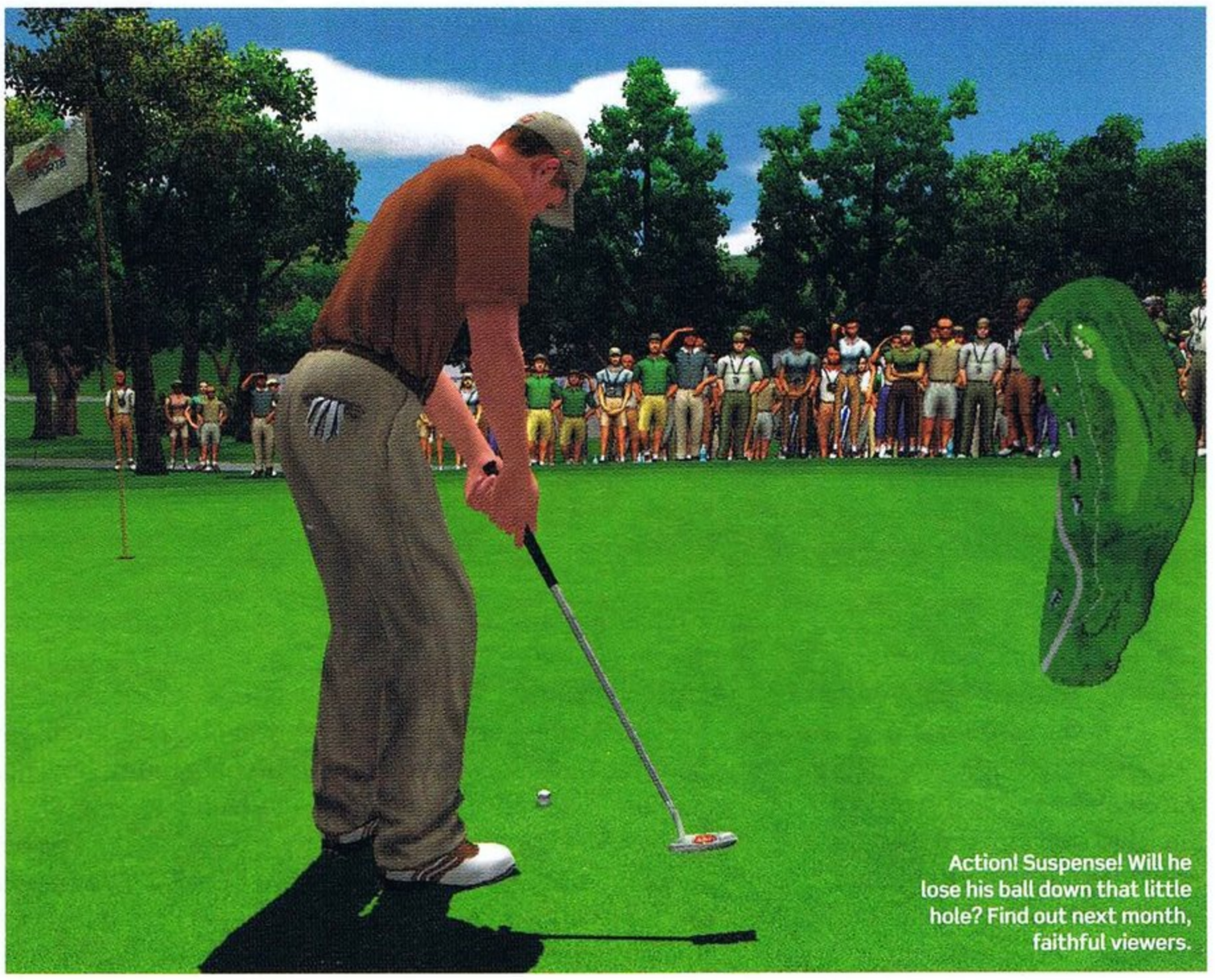
Time for EA to take a mulligan



The settings are gorgeous, perfect recreations of the golfing greats.



In a rare Caddy-Shack moment, you get to 'be the ball'.



Action! Suspense! Will he lose his ball down that little hole? Find out next month, faithful viewers.

Golf is about hitting the ball towards the pin. The surroundings are (mostly) green, the trousers embarrassing, and the pace slower than a mammoth's pulse.

The *Tiger Woods* series hit all these marks two years ago, and 2005's iteration drops them close to the pin once again. You can choose from four different swing variations to suit your needs and it's full of kings of the swingers and courses. But EA demand a yearly update and in the slow world of golf, finding something new to add every year must be an ordeal. This time, the annual merry-go-round has focused heavily on customising.

The best bit of this, the bit that makes sense as part of a game, is called Tiger Proofing. It gives you a predetermined degree of control over the courses, but it's more of a level-morpher than a level editor. You control conditions with a group of sliders. Whack the undulations up to maximum and your chosen course goes through puberty, coming out the other side lumpier than a bag of Maltesers. Then there's a series of meta-controls, from vegetation thickness, fairway and green sizes, to the time of day and weather controls. These are all wonderfully easy to use and the course you've warped is playable in seconds.

The other major customisation option, Game Face II, just gets in the way. Again through a set of sliders, you can customise your chosen character. There's a raft of choices, but the problem is EA demand you use it to access some other parts of the game. If changing the number of forehead wrinkles on your character had any bearing on your swing it wouldn't be so bad, but it doesn't.

The other options just get in the way

Yet you can't get into Tiger Proofing, Legend Tour or Career mode without going through the creation process first.

There are other bunkers in your way as well: fancy a lesson in how to draw or fade? You have to pay from your in-game wallet to get them – forcing you to play for cash before you learn. Why quite so many obstacles are laid in your path is a mystery. Just let me choose a young Tiger for the Career mode, dammit.

The golf is as addictive as ever. There really is nothing like hitting the sweet spot, drawing the ball just enough to curve around an obtrusive set of jutting-out branches. Make the right choice of club, power and shot and you'll find the most sedate game that ever made you shout "*Yes!*" But the weight of options that get in the way of *playing a game of golf* really makes this a shift too far.

It's good that EA are thinking of new things to hook you in, but what they've added simply isn't crick... uh, golf. Leave the tuner culture to the car enthusiasts, EA. Just map out the best courses, get the best players and hand me a club. I'll see you next year, on the banks of Loch Lomond....

CRAIG PEARSON

PC GAMES ADDICT Golf by the numbers

IT'S › Golf › Too soon › Still good

IT'S NOT › Immediate › Fast › A walk ruined

Tame

75%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** EA ■ **Developer** EA Sports ■ **They say** 500GHz, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 2.0GHz, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** Up to 4, online and LAN ■ **Link** www.easports.com/games/tigerwoods2005/home.jsp ■ **Influenced by** Tiger Woods 2004, 2004 ■ **Alternatively** Links 2003

PACIFIC FIGHTERS

More meatballs than a faggot factory

PC GAMES A JOINET GOLD GAME ★★★★★

One less Yankee bomber able to rain down incendiaries on our paper cities.

PF can be installed as either an *FB* add-on or a standalone sim.

As fond as I am of simulated WWII warfare if (and this is a fairly sizeable 'if') I was ever kidnapped by a gang of time-travelling karma terrorists and forced to step into the shoes of any of the participants in that conflict I think I'd plump for the size nines of US intelligence officer, Capt. Frank T. McCoy.

Together with two colleagues – Francis Williams and Joe Grattan – Frank spent much of the war holed-up in a stuffy Melbourne office sifting through intel on Japanese aircraft. Where's the fun in that then? Well, every time a new plane appeared they were the ones who got to think up the official codename.

The 'Betty' bombers I've been hunting for the past couple of days in the skies above Port Moresby (*Pacific Fighters*' intense RAAF New Guinea campaign) were named after a pretty nurse who Francis 'knew' when he lived in Pennsylvania.

Craft fling cannon shells skyward

The 'Vals' that plunged past me like aluminium pelicans as I fought for my life over a wreck-strewn Pearl Harbour this very morning, were dubbed in honour of a friend of McCoy's boss.

The Mustang-taming Ki-84 'Frank' fighter I plan to take for a spin once this pesky review is out of the way (fleets of shiny B-29 bombers have started appearing over Nagasaki) well, you can probably guess how that one got its handle.

Fire-spitting, bomb-hurling Nipponese cloud chariots made to sound like aging aunts and uncles. Do you really need any other reasons for buying this excellent sim? Oh, you do.

How about the impressive choice of beautifully recreated American crates, then. Previous PTO projects such as Microprose's magnificent *Pacific Air War* may have provided more balanced hangars (presently *Pacific Fighters* lacks flyable versions of key torpedo bombers like the Avenger and Kate) but out-of-the-box, no non-Maddox offering can boast a better mix of quality and quantity.

The tubby Grumman tabbies (Wildcat and Hellcat) that did the bulk of the US Navy's dogfighting between '41 and '45 are particularly pleasing.

Convincing skins, cosy cockpits, imaginative damage visuals *and* a complete joy to fly even if every time you want to land the F4F you do have to painstakingly hand-crank the gear into position.

For long-distance ocean flying it's always comforting to have more than one purring Pratt &

Thumbnail Review

***FB* with floating aerodromes**

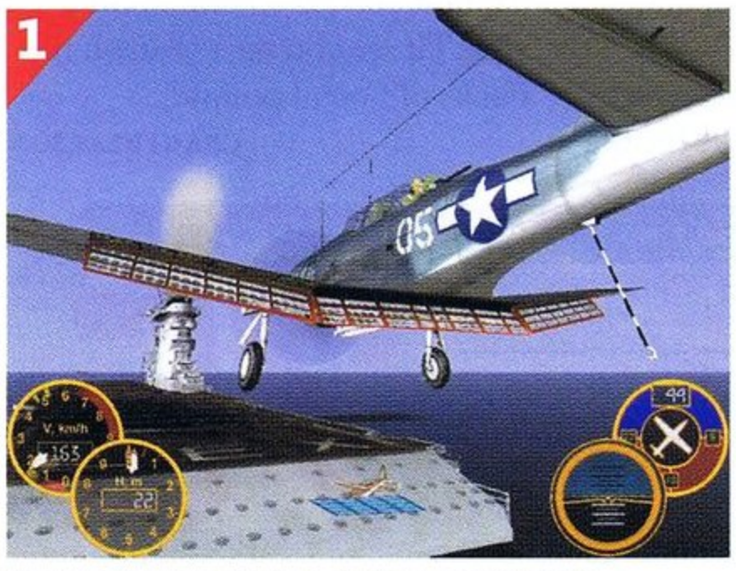
- ☑ Brutalise Betties
- ☑ Kibosh Kates
- ☑ Eviscerate Emilies
- ☒ Molest Maureens

Few major innovations but a great way to see-out the 12 months until *Battle of Britain* arrives.

HIT THE DECK

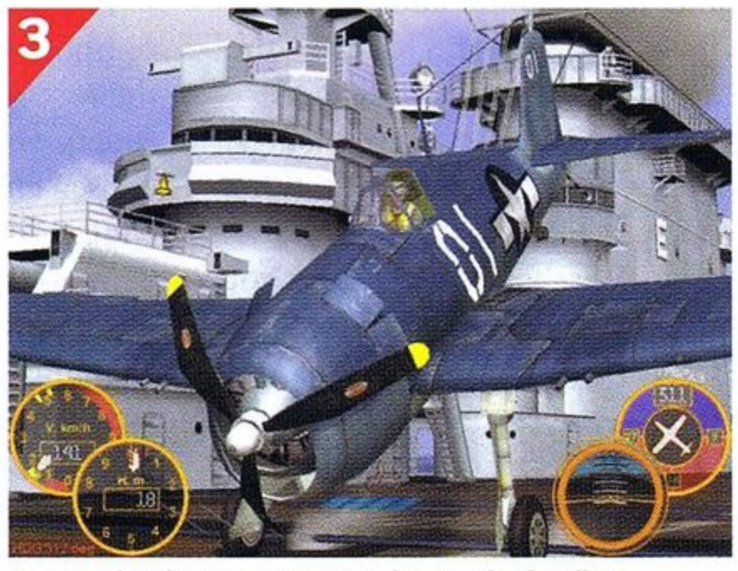
Flat-top flight school

Carrier landings can get messy if you don't follow a few simple guidelines



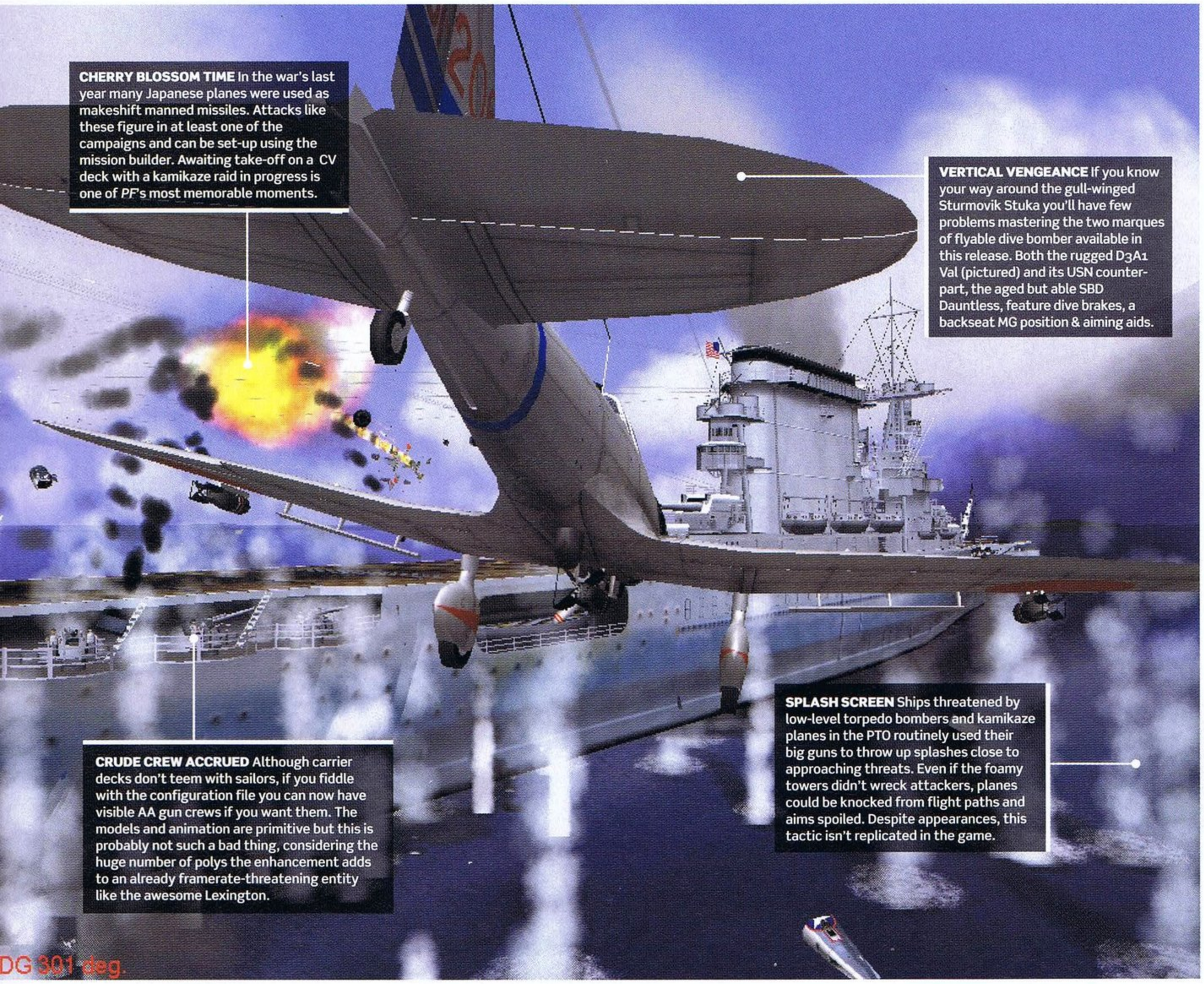
Keep your approach slow, shallow, and straight, remembering to lower your landing gear, flaps and that all-important tail hook.

You're better off losing the 3D cockpit. An unobstructed view and the new vector reticle make judging an approach much easier.



Try your hardest to manage a three-point landing. Touching-down with the tail high can lead to bounces and some nasty prangs.

"Suicide is planeless? Not in this game"



CHERRY BLOSSOM TIME In the war's last year many Japanese planes were used as makeshift manned missiles. Attacks like these figure in at least one of the campaigns and can be set-up using the mission builder. Awaiting take-off on a CV deck with a kamikaze raid in progress is one of *PF*'s most memorable moments.

VERTICAL VENGEANCE If you know your way around the gull-winged Sturmovik Stuka you'll have few problems mastering the two marques of flyable dive bomber available in this release. Both the rugged D3A1 Val (pictured) and its USN counterpart, the aged but able SBD Dauntless, feature dive brakes, a backseat MG position & aiming aids.

CRUDE CREW ACCRUED Although carrier decks don't teem with sailors, if you fiddle with the configuration file you can now have visible AA gun crews if you want them. The models and animation are primitive but this is probably not such a bad thing, considering the huge number of polys the enhancement adds to an already framerate-threatening entity like the awesome Lexington.

SPLASH SCREEN Ships threatened by low-level torpedo bombers and kamikaze planes in the PTO routinely used their big guns to throw up splashes close to approaching threats. Even if the foamy towers didn't wreck attackers, planes could be knocked from flight paths and aims spoiled. Despite appearances, this tactic isn't replicated in the game.

Whitney providing power.

Pacific Fighters supplies several larger multi-motored rides including the A-20 Havoc and the B-25 Mitchell – the bulky bomber that daringly launched from US carrier Hornet in April '42 to raid Tokyo. Both machines offer a choice of cramped, draughty MG-equipped cubbyholes from which you can spray marauding bogeys.

A rarely modelled and consequently very welcome presence among the bigger birds is the British-made Beaufighter. Right now it's the only flyable in the fleet that's capable of delivering the dolphin of the ordnance world – the torpedo.

Even if, as seems likely, more pilotable tinfish-toters arrive soon in free updates, torpedo attacks in *Pacific Fighters* won't be truly satisfying until Oleg makes his stunning ships a little more skittish and their torps a little more sensitive. Currently craft fling frightening quantities of cannon shells skyward during an attack but won't use rudders to evade, and tinfish are far too tolerant of fast, high drops.

Talking of salty shortcomings, where are the LSOs – those crucial gents with ping-pong bats who guide planes onto carrier decks? *CFS2*'s 2D representations might not have been perfect but they were preferable to having to rely on artificial aids or fiddle with seat height to gain a decent view during approaches. Conveying peripheral vision is still an inherent hiccup in flight-sims.

Other minor deficiencies such as the shortage of single sorties and historical skins (Brit flyables such as the Seafire have particularly meagre wardrobes) should be rectified rapidly by the community.

They should also be viewed in the context of two discs already packed to the gunnels with great content. Numerous maps covering every important combat area from the Coral Sea to Japan's southern tip, a choice of dynamic campaigns capable of keeping most of us busy for months if not years, new high-headcount multiplayer options... If *Pacific Fighters* were a bomb-laden Betty its belly would be brushing the tops of the palm trees at the end of the strip.

TIM STONE

PC GAMES ADDICT Soars above the competition

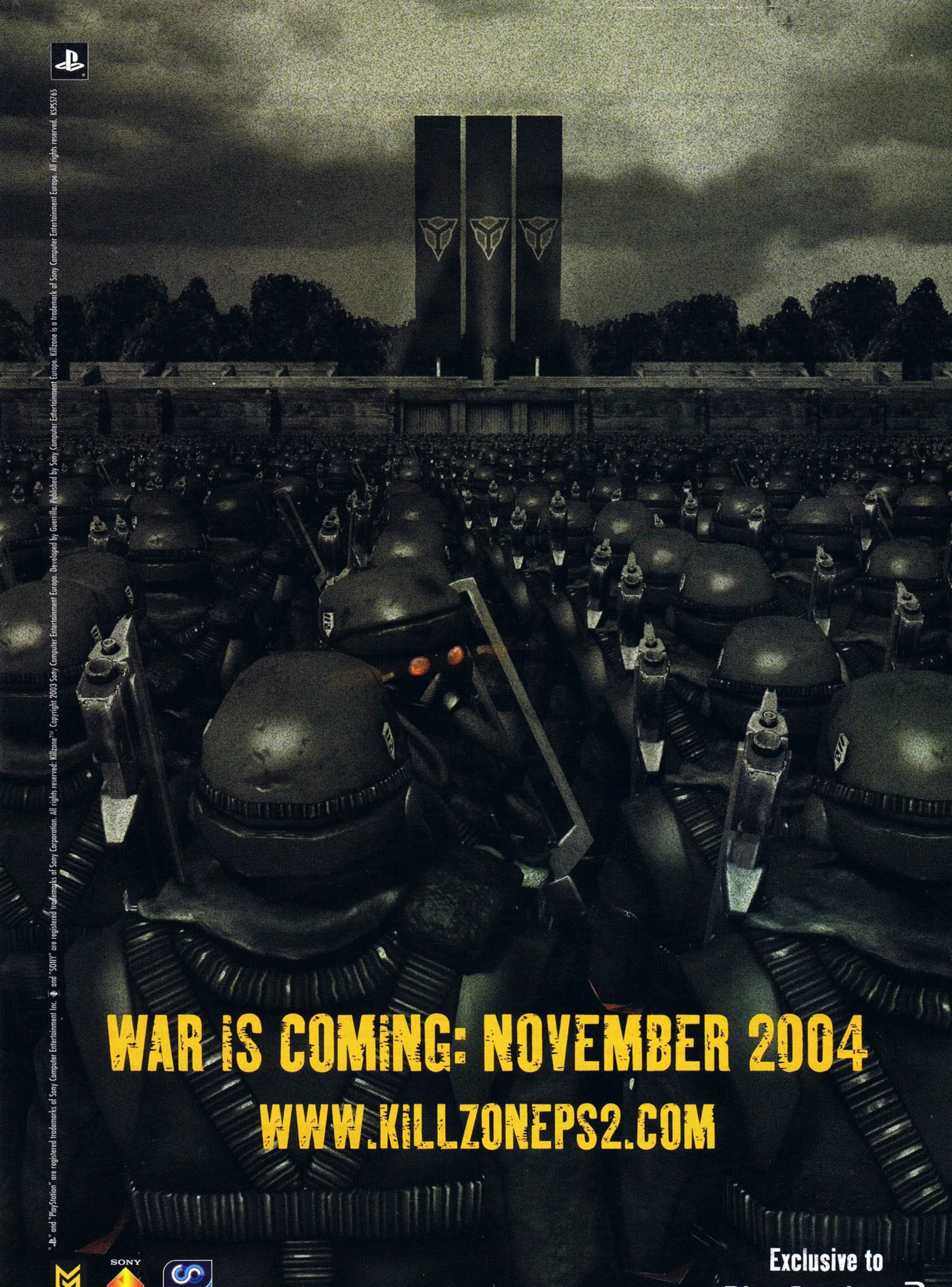
IT'S › Tora! › Tora! › Tora!

IT'S NOT › A revelation › Only fighters › Great in the torp dept

Pacifier

86%

■ **Release** Out now ■ **Publisher** Ubisoft ■ **Developer** 1C:Maddox ■ **They say** 1GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **We say** 3GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ **Multiplayer** LAN, Internet, 2-128 players ■ **Link** www.pacific-fighters.com ■ **Influenced by** Forgotten Battles, Flying Leathernecks ■ **Alternatively** Rowan's Battle of Britain



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LINEAGE II

The Dark Ages finally return to the West

As I said in the original review, don't be too surprised if you've never heard of the *Lineage* games. Despite being the most successful MMORPG ever, the original made few waves outside of its native Korea. Even this sequel is only now making its way out of Korean borders.

Beyond bringing the graphics up to modern day standards, it plays more or less like every other MMORPG out there, but with a few notable twists. Player vs player combat, usually avoided like the plague by western designers, is an integral part of the action. Death comes easily, often for no good reason.

This is very much a game for the long-haul. To enjoy to its biggest and most interesting features, notably the epic Castle Sieges (scheduled on the main *Lineage* homepage), you have to spend a lot of time levelling up and getting involved in the social, grouping side of things. At the moment, this can be tricky, although the next major expansion (*Chronicle*) is due to add plenty of new social mini-games and areas to explore.

Lineage II has all the main features you'd expect from such a long-running MMORPG, including pets, questing, epic missions and well established guilds. However, the world as a whole is a very mixed bag – not very exciting, yet peppered with sparks of interest that ultimately depend on your personal taste. Being able to spear annoying people through the gullet? Hurrah! Armies banding together to conquer castles? Hurrah! Wandering through Dark Elf cities full of pretty-boy goth poets and monochrome bondage queens? Er... Your call.

Pretty-boy goth poets and bondage queens

Either way, it's such extremes that make *Lineage II* stand out from the crowd, not the day-to-day questing that has all been done better elsewhere. If you're tired of the genre's usual training wheels and want to try something a little more challenging, *Lineage II* has plenty to keep you going.

RICHARD COBBETT

PC GAMES

Back once again... and yet somehow much the same as ever.

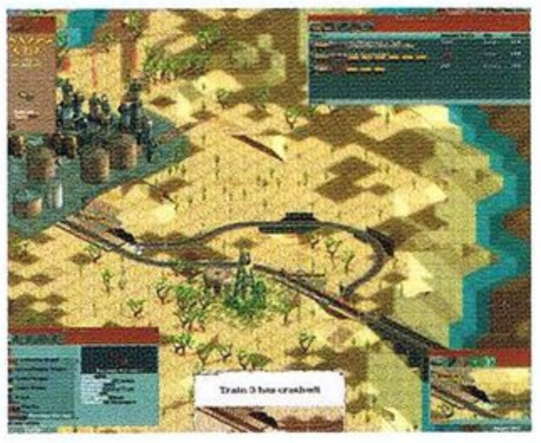
68%

Just one more downpour, and they would be free of the giant Polo that had imprisoned them.

■ **Release** Out now (US) November (Europe) ■ **Publisher** NCSoft ■ **Developer** In-house
■ **Multiplayer** Massively ■ **Link** www.lineage2.com ■ **Alternatively** Final Fantasy XI

CHRIS SAWYER'S LOCOMOTION

Actually, if you buy it, it's your *Locomotion*, but shh!



Chris Sawyer, creator of *Rollercoaster Tycoon* and *Transport Tycoon*, is the Last of the Bedroom Programmers. Every aspect of this game (except the pared-down art and music) flows from his inspired fingers. So watching the video tutorial means you're watching *him* move the mouse!

It also means you're watching the flaws of the game, amplified through the designer's eye. Pop-ups that block other windows; the way the game is unplayable on lower resolutions as windows get lost off of the edge of the screen; all this you can see through the mirror of Chris' twitching pointer.

You can also see that this is *Transport Tycoon: Redux*. You take control of a company intent on building the finest damn transport infrastructure and making a profit too; exactly unlike Sydney's CityRail train service. Build tracks, roads and stations, populate them with vehicles and assign routes and cargos between town and industries, with different aims dependent on the scenario.

Exactly unlike Sydney's CityRail

The biggest difference is the AI; the bigger brains of modern computers mean much more intelligent competitors to play against. A lot of extraneous elements have also been trimmed.

The joy of the game comes from watching: watching your cities grow up, trying to spy what the AI (or human in multiplayer) is planning by watching their mini-screen, and watching your trains, planes and John Candy impersonators trek backwards and forwards. There's a cute yet powerful scenario editor if the many supplied scenarios aren't enough, too.

Never mind that the graphics are carved from stone, the music gloriously 1980s. Sit back. Watch Chris's little hands move the mouse about. If it's not perfect, you know exactly who to blame.

DAN GRILIOPOULOS

PC GAMES

Neither loco, nor a cause of commotion, but a lasting classic.

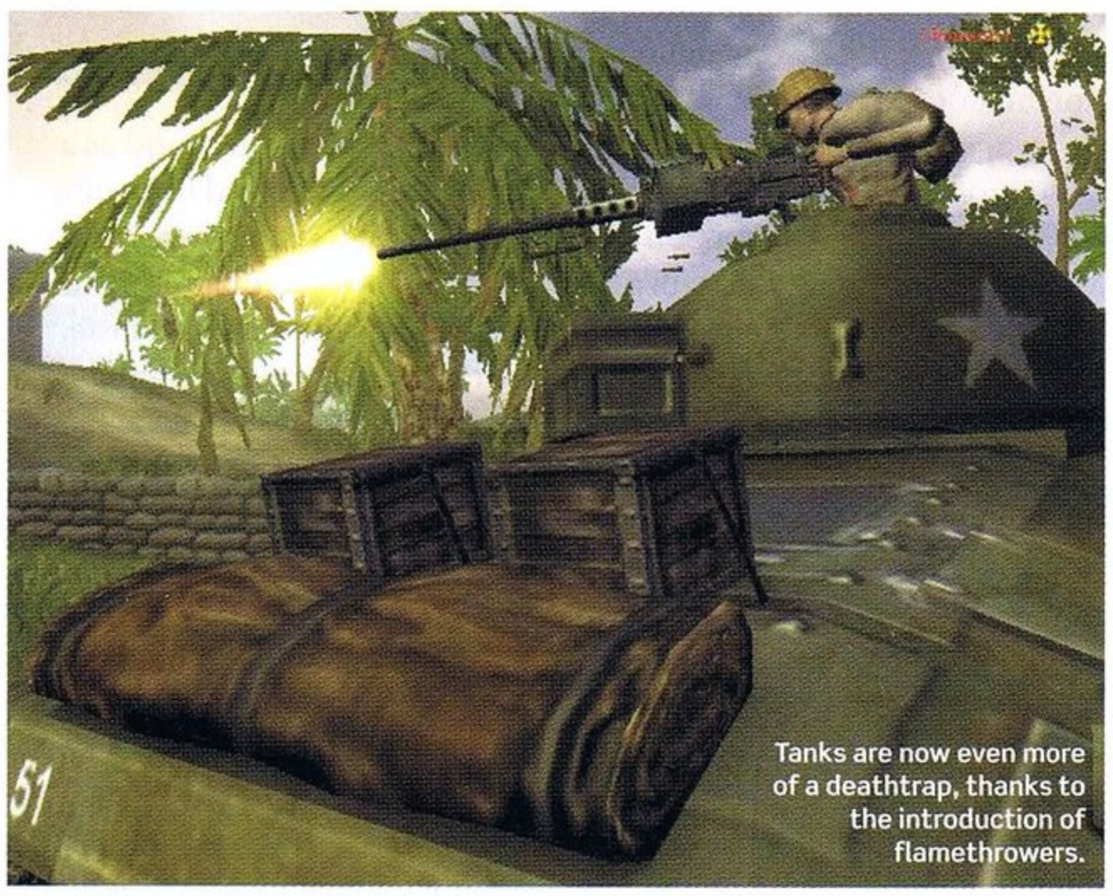
72%

And if it goes under 18 clicks , it explodes, thankfully killing Keanu Reeves.

■ **Release** Out now **Publisher** Atari ■ **Developer** Chris Sawyer
■ **Multiplayer** two player ■ **Link** www.chrissawyer.com ■ **Alternatively** Transport Tycoon

THE FINEST GAMING FREEBIES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Somehow, the brave sacrifice of the kamikaze doesn't seem quite so impressive with respawn.


Tanks are now even more of a deathtrap, thanks to the introduction of flamethrowers.

CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Chris Delay
Credits *Uplink*, *Darwinia*

My fave game: I have just finished *Doom 3*, which did a great job of scaring the (*poop* - Potty Talk Ed) out of me in the first half, and boring the crap out of me in the second. And I've also been playing *PlanetSide* for a while now with the New Conglomerate.

My fave mod: I've been playing *Counter-Strike* on and off for years. It's an amazing achievement from an independent group of developers.

The thing I'm most looking forward to: Valve's *Half-Life 2*, of course. It looks completely, utterly awesome.

BF: VIETNAM MOD

World War II

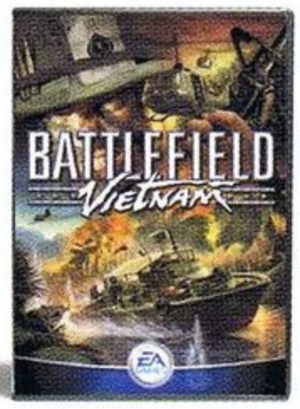
Battlefield comes full circle

Genetic splicing is a good thing. Here's the proof: the official World War II mod for *Battlefield: Vietnam*. It marries the hysterical running battles of the original *Battlefield: 1942* (where you can load a jeep with high explosive and drive it headlong down the enemy's runway) with the modern graphics and welcome improvements in technology that underpin the jungle-jumping sequel, *Battlefield: Vietnam*.

The three maps chosen for conversion are taken from the Pacific theatre, and show off *Vietnam*'s improved foliage. Now Allied troops can crawl through the undergrowth on Iwo Jima; plant mines and C4 packs in the brush; and then giggle in glee as the Japanese armour trundles right over them, oblivious to their deadly presence.

DOWN LOADER
***Battlefield Vietnam* meets the Axis and Allies**

Two new weapons have been introduced to WWII combat. The flamethrower is the highlight – use it to scorch the earth around those vital capture points, or to fill bunkers with cleansing fire. Any objects, from trees to tanks, will blaze for five or six seconds, useful for trapping any last defenders. The mortar is ported from *BF: Vietnam* – it's best used across the open straights of the Invasion of the Philippines map, lobbing high explosive across the shallow canals as patrol boats and landing craft scurry between the shores. We hope that the effort DICE have invested into this conversion will kick-start a new wave of *BF: Vietnam* conversions. Until then, you'll find us inside a Sherman tank, crashing through the undergrowth on Wake Isle.



PC GAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER — 298Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.eagames.com/official/battlefield
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Patched *Battlefield: Vietnam*
An essential freebie for *Battlefield: Vietnam*	

LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH

Use the Download Manager to judge download speed, or find the best gaming picks of the month on the DVD.

◀ BROADBAND BREEZE — BROADBAND BREAKER ▶

10Mb	50Mb	150Mb	1Gb
56k friendly	*Modem mare*	*Modem meltdown*	*Nightie night*

SHAREWARE

Scorched3D

Burn, baby, burn

Shopping Hero

Remember when you were choosing your character's Origin for *City of Heroes*, and there was all that confusing stuff about which special Enhancements you'd be able to use? Ever wondered where you get them? The answer is Cooke's Electronics, or one of the other inconspicuous Origin-specific shops dotted around Paragon City that sell these potent gizmos. Cooke's is for Technology heroes, while The Orion Institute is for Science ones, Pandora's Box is for Magic and so on. They're not easy to find, though, so a Mr Venares has knocked together this indispensable little mod to mark them on your map. It's on the DVD > Mods.

Some islands are prettier than others. A small tank war could only improve this one.

The maps are randomly generated, so it's pot luck what you get and where you end up.

Say "tanks for the memories" with us, as the 2D turn-based classic *Scorched Earth* gets a lick of 3D polygons, and another ancient PCGA tanks joke gets an airing.

Scorched3D is a free online game that takes the original premise – aim and fire at the enemy over a deformable landscape – and lays textured 3D terrain over the top. The action is sedate: you have several targets around the map, most of them hidden behind huge chunks of rock. When it's your turn to fire, you adjust the elevation, aim (taking into account the breeze), and let off one of a selection of nasty missiles. There's sadistic artistry in making little adjustments that take advantage of the collapsible terrain. Such as blasting the ground right out from under a target and watching it die a watery death in the sea below.

The more people you kill, the bigger arsenal you can acquire from the in-game purchase system. Go play now.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

20Mb

DATA FLOW

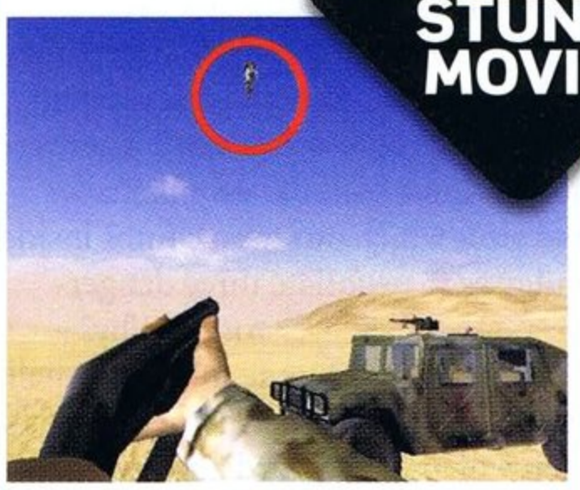
Link	www.scorched3d.co.uk
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Net connection
The updating game	

MACHINIMA

BF STUNTACULAR

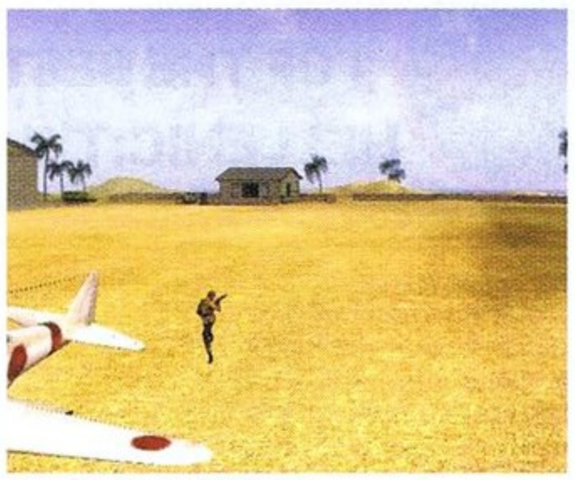
Why should I download it? It's the latest stunt movie from the *Battlefield* community, featuring deranged antics from *BF1942* and *Desert Combat*, without the aid of any tweaks or stunt mods.

DOWN LOADER STUNT MOVIE

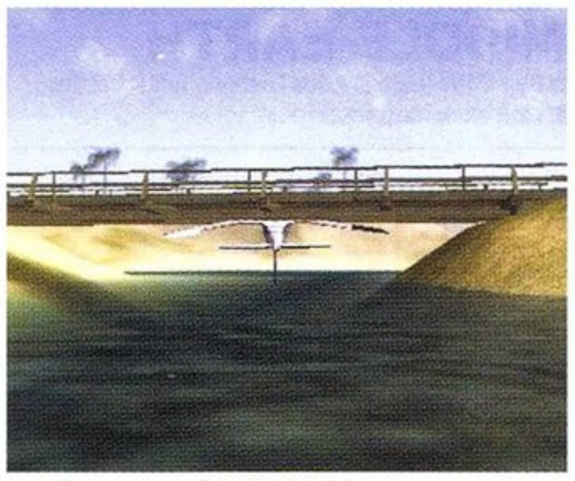


1 INSERT HERE
A plane swoops and drops our stuntman... right into the driver's seat.

2 LOOPY
Our pilot drops his co-pilot on the way up and then picks him up on the way down.



3 HOT WINGS
With perfect timing, our stuntman jumps the wing of this lethally low-flying Jap.



4 DOWN UNDER
Flying under bridges is so passé. We fly under them while upsidedown, this season.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

67Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.xtremegamesinc.com/xanatos/bfs
Discs	Damn that awful copyright soundtrack
Requires	Windows Media Player
Triumphant jackass japery. Do try this at home	

FILE DUMP

Light Bytes

Mark Sutherns lays out the online nibbles

CHEATERMOVIE

Watch as an evil cheater is physically removed from a US LAN, swiftly followed by his so-called 1ee7 machine. The movie has been knocking about for a good 12 months and is obviously staged, but is so well done it deserves a wider audience. Our favourite bits? The initial "WTF" cries as the cheater is discovered, the way his monitor bounces as it hits the concrete, and the guy at the end picking through the wreckage. Rescued from internet obscurity, we've got round the dead links by setting up the file for download at **ftp.futurenet.com/pub/dailyradar/pc/cheatermed.wmv**

STAR WARS GANGSTER RAP

The original track helped put a smile on many PCGA faces when it surfaced a couple of years back. While the genius of the rap itself hasn't faded, the old flash movie that accompanied it was becoming seriously bantha-eared. This digitally remastered version from Bent TV ensures bad-ass rap hand gestures are now sprinkled liberally throughout, while Luke and Darth sport a couple of suitably bling medallions. Essential viewing for lovers of the classic and newbies alike. **http://atomfilms.shockwave.com/af/content/gangsta_rap_se**

ROBY BAGGIO'S MAGICAL KICKS

At a loss for a decent online football game, I'm now getting my kicks over at the web residence of Italy's Roberto Baggio. You'll find a cunning little flash game here that allows you to indulge in the subtle art of direct free kicks; tweaking shot power, height and bend to dink one over the wall and into the onion bag. It's tricky but well worth a couple of teabreaks. The only drawback being Robbie's badly translated advice. "Check always if the wind blows behind you". Thanks for that, you ponytailed penalty fluffer. **www.robertobaggio.com**

FM 2005 SKIN

A cheeky one this. Just to add to the confusion over the current political state of the football management genre, here's a download for *Champ Man 03/04* that dresses the game in the new skin being developed by Sports Interactive for *Football Manager 2005*. Considering the authors have had just a few screens and a few months to put this together they've done an incredible job. There are no major changes to the match engine screen, but if you're looking for a quick refresh for *CM* while you wait for the new games to arrive, grab this at **www.sortitoutsi.net**

UT2004 MOD

Metaball mod

What marble madness is this?

The *Unreal* engine has been contorted into more shapes than a double-jointed yoga master, but none as cute as *Metaball*. There are no guns, just balls of various shapes and sizes which our hero climbs inside and uses to negotiate three danger-steeped, singleplayer zones. Why? Because this is a rescue mission. Small, cuddly creatures called Tinies are at the mercy of an evil wizard and they must be saved. Yes, they must.

It begins in the Hub (the evil mage's castle) which must be explored in third person. Eventually you'll come across icons in the pavement which provide the warp gates to zones where Tinies are held captive. The three distinct zones present very different challenges. Dexterity Zones are assault courses that force you to switch ball types to beat the devilish puzzles and collect Sunicons for points. Think *Marble Madness* meets *Kick Start*. Next up, the Evacuation zones are another fiendish course that requires you to attach Tinies to your ball and drag them out against the clock. Finally there's the Speed mode, in which you'll race through tubes like a steroid-popping hamster, picking up icons at breakneck speeds in an indestructible ball-bearing.

Each zone has many different levels to explore and for a first release, *Metaball* displays some masterful spit and polish. Owners of *UT2004* are being spoilt like a Victorian child right now, but if you only play five *UT* mods this month, we really recommend that this is one of them.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

80Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.metaball.org
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*UT2004*
Balls-out, old school puzzling	

DOWN LOADER

BALLSY MOD

It's like one of those things they used to land the Mars Rover. Except it works.

Lasers! 3D terrain! More lasers! *Marble Madness* was never like this.

MEDIVEAL MODS

3 OF THE BEST HELLENIC:TW

■ **By** HTW Team ■ **Adds** Setting, map, factions, units ■ **Link** www.hellenictotalwar.com

Set during war-torn Greece circa 250AD, you're able able to take control of 14 factions over three eras, each with unique, historically accurate units. The level of research is impressive, and the campaign map is beautifully realised. Carvings, statuary and historical artwork replace unit and building art, giving this mod a very credible, authoritative feel. Indeed, this mod looks so convincing, it could be mistaken for a commercial release.

MIDDLE-EARTH

■ **By** METW Team ■ **Adds** Factions, units, battles ■ **Link** www.metw.net/forum

The aim, as you'd hope, is to offer the main armies of The Lord of The Rings universe as playable factions, and add appropriate Tolkienesque units: Uruk-Hai, men of Gondor, Rohan cavalry and many more. An original beta version is still out there which allows custom battles, but the team plan to finish it off this year, making the campaign map fully playable.

NAPOLEONIC

■ **By** The Lordz ■ **Adds** Setting, campaign, units ■ **Link** www.thelordz.co.uk

Dragging Napoleonic wargaming into the 21st century, this mod also shifts *Medieval*'s timeframe into the diminutive Frenchman's era. Units are replaced with Dragoon Guards, Black Watch infantry, horse-drawn cannon and the like; the battlefield dynamic is dominated by cannon but the lines of infantry blasting away with muskets, shrouded in smoke, look great.

DOOM 3 MODS

Doom 3 modding spree

The Devil makes work for idle modders

One month and countless *Doom 3* mods later, it seems John Carmack's engine is as moddable as a teenager's hair. The question of whether this reflects the flexibility and versatility of the software, or merely dissatisfaction with the game is one that's currently tying up the community in knots. But we're happy to be tied up in mods, so here's a quick round-up of the best.

Demonic Powers mod v1.0 treats your arms to Revenant rockets in place of fists. The missiles home in directly on the enemy, as long as you lock-on before you let loose. You also get the Imp fireball, a weak but spectacular ball of flame that arcs like a ball. A ball of acid.

The *Laser Sight* mod is almost cheating, but in a way that makes you feel good about yourself. It adds bright sights to all the weapons. This subtle tweak gives you just enough light in the dark to notice any movement, but it's fleeting enough for you to overlook if you're not careful.

But we've kept our favourite mod for last – the *Flashlight Deathmatch* mod. A failing generator plunges the whole level into darkness. The only weapon is a one-hit kill flashlight. The tension mounts: do you hide in a corner or switch the light off, watching for the other players' lights? Dramatic stuff.

Can't hit a blast door at five paces? Try the *Laser Sight* mod.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

5Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.doom3.com
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	*Doom 3*
Mod-ern life isn't rubbish	

Red or Dead

The *Red Orchestra* team have so far won themselves $20,000 in Epic's *Unreal Tournament 2004* mod-making contest, and we're going to go rattling on about their fine World War II mod until we get our cut. Um, only jesting, of course. We're touting this mod so hard because it's damn good, and if you haven't got that message yet you clearly need to download the newly released version 3.0 right now. Tank battles, explosives and a new artillery system are just some of the new features in this first-person mod based on WWII's Eastern front and the fierce fighting that took place there. Play for free now, the shops will be charging for it before long. **http://redorchestramod.gameservers.ne**

BF VIETNAM MOD

Point of Existence 0.1

Thankfully light on existentialism

Get tanked up. *Point of Existence* brings modern armoured vehicles to *BF: Vietnam*.

Tsk, all this conflict over oil. The sooner we convert to potato-powered cars, the better.

The year is 2007 and the world is in turmoil. The Russians and Americans are at each other's throats again. Neighbours Sudan and Kenya have dragged the largest nations into an oil dispute that threatens to reduce Africa to rubble. Time to fight it out, *Battlefield* style.

This *Vietnam* mod is still mostly about jungle-based combat, with you pulling on the boots of a Russian or American grunt. The US have the likes of M1A2 Abrams, M2A3 Bradley and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to help them out. The Bradleys in particular are great additions, bring the convenience of swappable weapon loadouts to the *BF: Vietnam* arsenal.

Russians can give as good as they get with T-90 tanks and BMP-3s to crush the Western world under their tracks.

For a first public release, this mod is in surprisingly good shape. With enough players for a competitive game, it's well worth a blast.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

85Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.pointofexistence.com
Discs	Unnavailable
Requires	*Battlefield: Vietnam*
A good point well made	

SHAREWARE

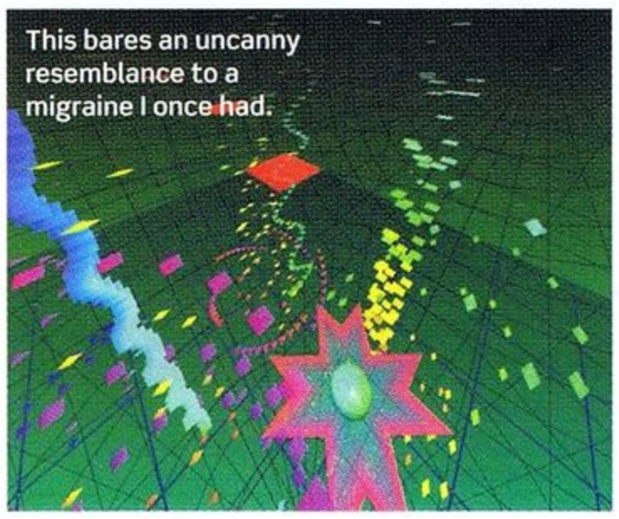
Tranquillity

Welcome to the See of Tranquillity

DOWN LOADER TAKE A TRIP

You hit the left arrow and the beat increases in your ear. The room spins. A twist of the mouse lurches the view in a tilted spiral to the right – yellow 2D squares play in the air with orange triangles. You hold the space bar down and plummet to the ground, then let go just before impact and soar into the air again, towards a Spinner...

Tranquillity is like Tron mixed with the freedom of a first-person shooter – with 'no clipping' enabled. Sort of.



This bares an uncanny resemblance to a migraine I once had.

As a game, it has a simple premise: to bounce into the Spinners that float throughout the level. It's not easy at the start, but that's the point. The Spinners are just McGuffins to keep you playing: the oddly compelling music and ever changing environment are the real reasons to play.

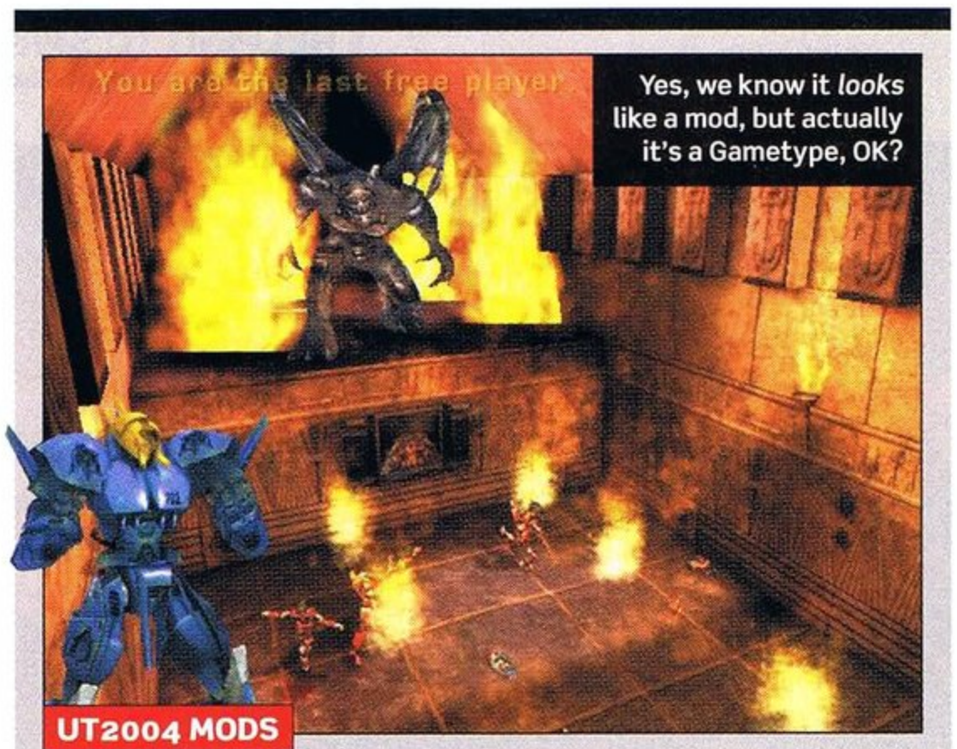
To call this a 'game' is somewhat misleading, but it's compelling, different and wonderfully realised. Even better, although it's shareware, you still get a new level every day to demo. Just sign up at the link below.

PCGAMES DOWNLOAD MANAGER

1Mb

DATA FLOW

Link	www.tqworld.com
Discs	On the discs
Requires	Internet connection
George and Trippy	



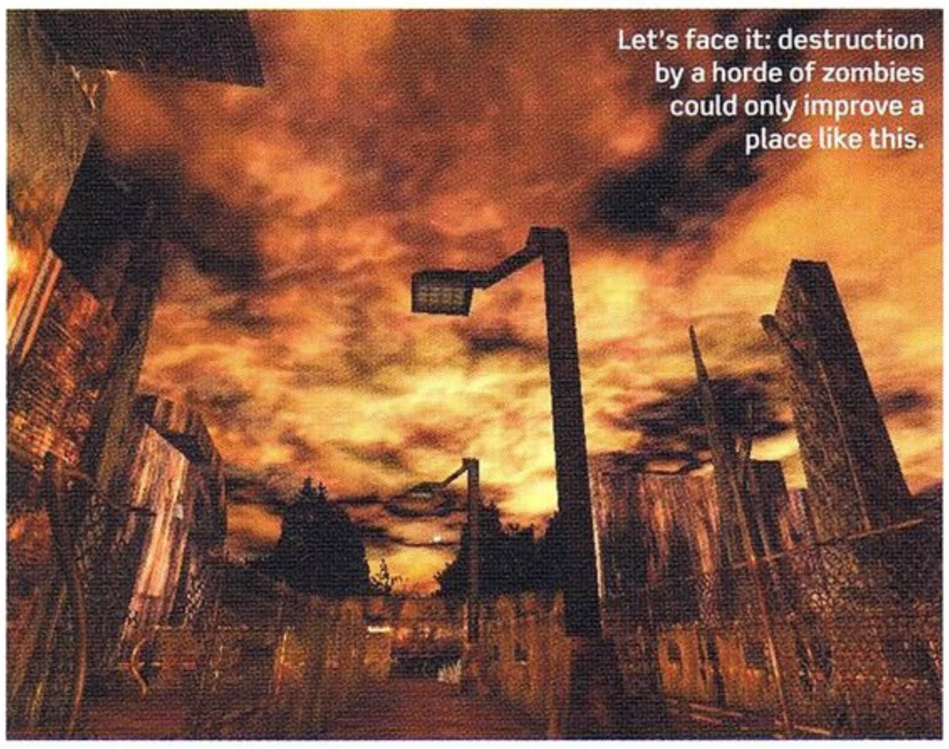
UT2004 MODS

UT Gametypes

The middle-men of mods

Though they'd all pass for mods in any other game, there are actually three types of modification you can make for *Unreal Tournament 2004* – Mutators are stackable tweaks and touches, mods proper are total conversions, and Gametypes are... somewhere in between, apparently. Generally these take *UT* and reshuffle its existing features, seldom adding new models or effects but nevertheless drastically changing the mechanics of the game. Gametypes are thus a separate category in Epic's Make Something Unreal contest, but we have our own ideas as to the top five. We've made sure our choices are all playable in single-player mode against bots, so you won't have to look for servers to play them on. Find all of them but the tricksy 2D2K4 and hefty Jailbreak on the discs.

MOD	WHAT'S WHAT
JAILBREAK	The winner is hard to argue with. In this team deathmatch, killing someone sends them to the jail at your team's base. They can be busted out, but if the whole team is captured, everyone gets to watch the map-specific mass execution on Jailbreak TV.
SPECTRAL TANDEM	CTF with six player-classes: from the speedy flak-dealing Vanguard to the turret-building Specialist. They force you to co-ordinate your attacks: not only do they complement one another, but enemy flag defences will be bolstered by the stay-at-home classes.
MASTER SLAVE	This starts out as a free-for-all. But when you kill someone they become your ghostly slave – unable to attack or get hit, and any equipment they pick up goes straight to you. So why *should* they pick anything up? Because they have to help you to free themselves.
2D2K4	It's odd that people keep flattening popular 3D games. *2D2K4* still uses the *UT2004* engine, it just makes the camera look side-on at specially designed platform-based levels. Mappers have created everything from Mario remakes to *UT* map conversions.
GEM FEEDER	This intriguing perversion of CTF replaces your flags with three different shrines, which must be decorated with a gem for your team to score. Gems are dotted around the map, but they have evil twins: the A-Bombs. Plant one of these on an enemy shrine and, well...



Let's face it: destruction by a horde of zombies could only improve a place like this.

MOD NEWS

***Unreal Tournament* gets the Thriller treatment**

UT 2003

Out of Hell

Somebody left the backdoor open again

Zombie flesh. We crave it like they crave our brains. Even after the *Doom 3* duck-shoot, our trigger fingers itch uncontrollably for more shambling targets. Which is exactly where *Out of Hell* comes in.

Developed for *UT2003* with a *2004* version soon to follow, this single-player total conversion is set in the isolated town of Grinwood, where you play a security guard holed up at the local docks but oblivious to the otherworldly doings back in town. Giant cracks have appeared in the ground, spawning a plague of zombies who waste no time tucking into the locals. Soon after, a collection of tall demonic creatures emerge like concerned parents searching for their offspring, and set about hoovering up the survivors. It's not pretty.

Meanwhile, back at the docks, the stench of demonic horde prompts you to make a quick peggit into the nearby forest. But it's only when you discover the last refuge of the remaining survivors that you learn about the true source of the invasion and begin your one-man crusade to end the necro-terror.

At the beginning of the 12-mission campaign you'll choose from one of two paths. Both offer different challenges and endings, but fundamentally your choice decides whether you'll tackle the demonic tourists with brute force and melee weapons or rely on aim and limited ammo to see them off. The environments along either route promise plenty of pant-filling moments. From the dark grimy corridors of Grinwood General hospital, the blood-smeared walls of the Haweford Meat Plant and the rickety, corpse-ridden streets of the Grinwood outskirts, there's an inescapable, threatening tension that would have Doctor Van Helsing weeping over the panic button.

> They waste no time tucking into the locals

Our undead friends couldn't be more at home under Grinwood's stormy red skies, but you're not here to make them feel welcome. You'll be shaking rabid demon dogs from your legs while ducking under the lanky scythe-wielding limbs of 'The Tortured', while the festering 'Shriekers' drag their decomposing corpses your way. This is chucking-out time at Hell's hippodrome, and the streets must be cleansed level by level. Boss fights are sprinkled throughout, featuring crazed gun-toting locals and typically indestructible uber-zombies. In other words, this is one nightmare that's not going to end in a cold sweat and a reassuring cuppa. The screaming starts early 2005. It's going to be hell all over again.

Somehow a pack of blood-smeared zombie cats would only look funny in this situation.

PC GAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Single-player
Link www.outofhellgame.com
Percentage complete 85%

It's that familiar, gritty *Call of Duty* look, but this time around there's a twist to the conflict.

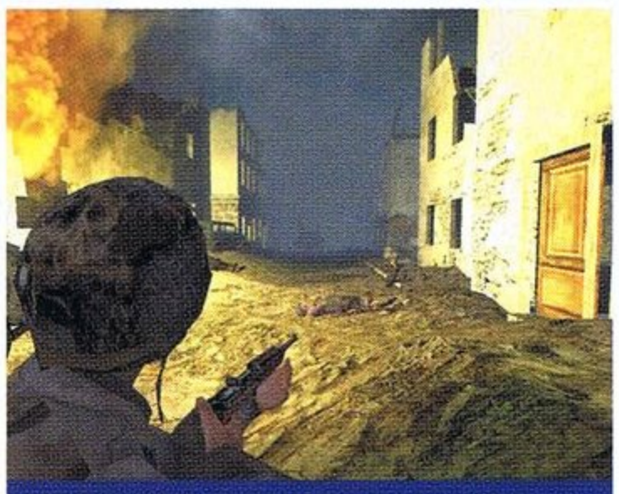
CALL OF DUTY

German Front

Raising the Teutonic

For all the bullet-biting atmosphere and frantic, desperate battles, *Call of Duty* was an incomplete WWII experience. We may have got to liberate Stalingrad with the Russians, gone château-raiding with the Yanks and busting dams with the British but, as usual, we were denied the chance to experience the conflict through the eyes of a German soldier. That glaring omission inspired this single-player mod, which puts us on the receiving end of the Allied attacks we've led so many times before.

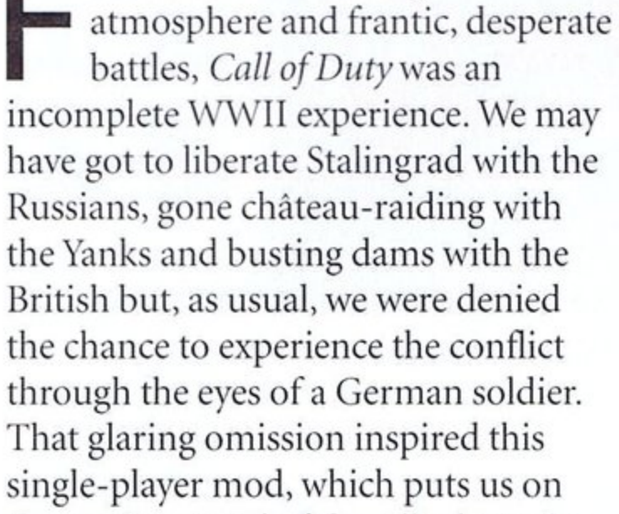
The opening of the new nine-mission campaign is refreshingly different. We're back on Omaha beach, but this time you're serving up the bullets rather than ducking them, playing a German machinegunner desperately trying to cut down allied troops as they wade onto the blood-soaked sand. As the relentless Allied advance rolls into France, the missions switch the emphasis to intensely personal gunfights aboard an armoured car, a battle on a train and a yomp through a swamp under heavy fire. Ending with a bitter final shootout on the streets of Saint Lô.



Playing as a German, this is one war sim you've lost before you've even begun.

With the campaign almost in the bag, the team recently turned their attention to a multiplayer mode. This will include 12 new maps and a class-based system to limit weapon loadouts, hopefully reducing the Rambo factor and placing a greater emphasis on teamwork. Intrigued? There's a demo on this month's discs.

MOD NEWS
NEED A HANS?



Tanks, explosions and machinegun fire. It's not remotely quiet on the *German Front*.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Single and multiplayer
Link www.germanfrontmod.de
Percentage complete 75%

Concept art like this suggests *Genetic* could really harness the potential of the *Doom 3* engine.

DOOM 3

Genetic

They've got your eyes

Treehuggers look away now. Here is a world destroyed by industrial pollution, propped up by a crumbling political structure. You play a member of the terrorist faction, N.O.I.R – the sworn enemy of the evil corporations. Your mission? To infiltrate Corporation HQ and snatch the plans for the genetically modified fighting force they're building. Predictably, you discover that the handywork of the Corporate scientists has gone belly-up. Cue corridors of mutated, bio-mechanically enhanced humanoids, plus guns and gut spillage.

Expect the familiar *Doom 3* claustrophobia, and an array of new weapons for all occasions. Still at least a 12 months off, *Genetic* is already a significant blip on the mod radar.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

Type Single-player
Link http://doom3genetic.ngz-network.de
Percentage complete 10%

DOOM 3

DOOM MOD ROUND-UP

A roll of duct tape goes a long way, as the torch-and-gun quick fixes have proved, but it's the hefty total conversions we're looking forward to. Several noteworthy projects are in the offing.

Operation Takedown (**www.optd-mod.net**) is a modern-day combat, single-player conversion in which you pull on the balaclava of a Counter-Terrorist in a series of story-based missions. Not an entirely unheard of concept, but the level of realism sounds grittier than a pebble dash sandwich. *Project Europa* (**www.home.no/kutulunadir/pesite**) takes the Mars scenario and lobs it over to Jupiter, where man's rabid curiosity has woken a plague of rather disgruntled local nasties.

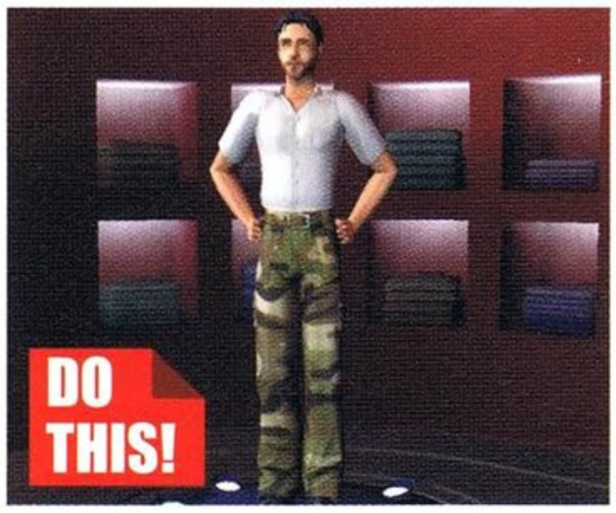
Finally, over at **www.planetdoom.com/d3f** you'll find a team working on a *Doom 3* version of the classic *Quake* multiplayer mod, *Team Fortress*. We can hardly wait for this labour of love.

How to create your own magazine editor for *The Sims 2*

BY NEIL RENNISON

D-I-Y

Learn to create perfect Sims using *Sims 2* Body Shop



WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

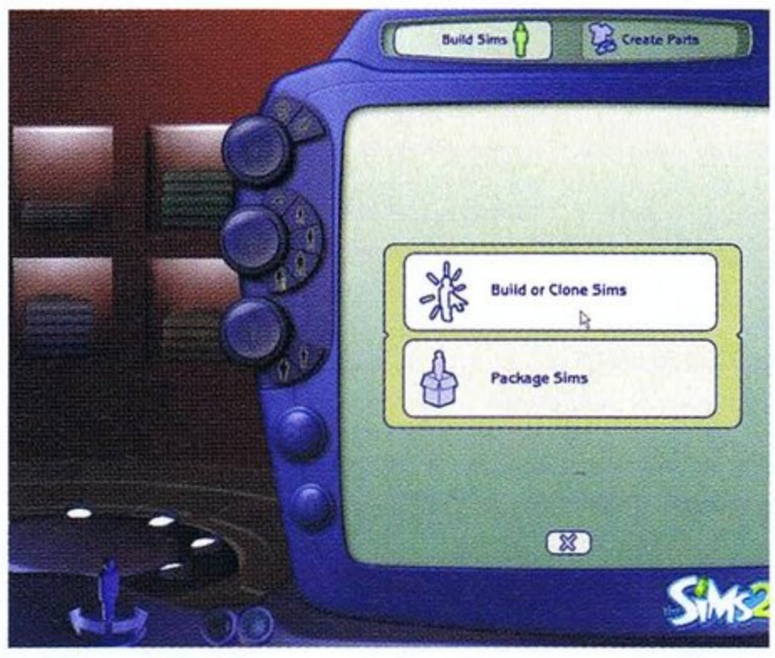
Skill Easy
Time 2 hours

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- Sims 2 Body Shop/Starter Pack **On the DVD (Resources)/online**
- An art package (eg, Paint Shop Pro) **On the DVD (Toolkit)/online**
- Sims 2 textures of PCGA assoc. ed **On the CD (Toolkit)**
- **NOTE!** The link on the CD is broken. Explore the CD, and open this file: **D:\Menu\Toolkit\Resources - Sims 2 Bodyshop textures.exe**

PCGAMES RESOURCE HARVESTER

- **EA Body Shop resources** http://thesims2.ea.com/bodyshop.php
- **Post your questions and answers here** http://forums.worldsims.org



01 GETTING AROUND

So you've loaded up *The Sims 2* Body Shop. Now it's time to get yourself acquainted with the funky interface. The screen is made up of three areas. On the left is where your future Sim will appear, in the middle are a number of controls controlling gender, age, and body type, and on the right is where all your Sim-sculpting tools will appear. For now, make sure the 'Build Sims' icon is highlighted at the top, and then click on the 'Build or Clone Sims' icon.

02 GENDER VENDOR

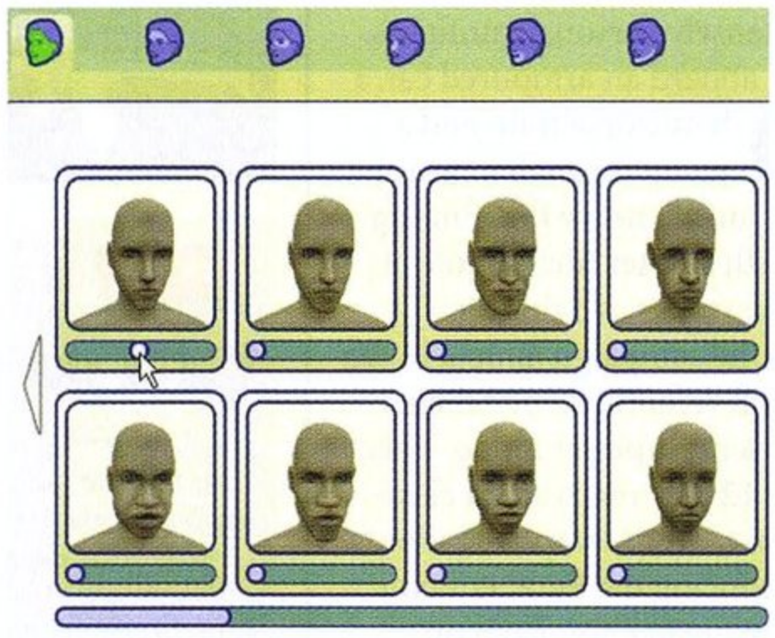
The next screen shows a green icon containing a cross. This is called the 'Sim Bin' and once you've created a few Sims, icons showing your creation will be selectable so you can come back and edit or clone them. For now, click on the icon to create your first Sim. A random Sim will appear on the left side of the screen. Unless I am very much mistaken, the associate editor of PCGA is male, so if your random Sim is female then click on the 'Male' icon.

03 ATKINS DIET

Next up we need to make him an adult, so make sure that 'Adult' is selected using the icons. The great thing about the Body Shop is that you can create a Sim and then see how they would look in the five age ranges. During *The Sims 2* game, your character will age to whatever you create in Body Shop. Finally make sure you have the thinner 'Body Type' selected at the bottom. Remember your Sim may not look like the one in the screenshot.

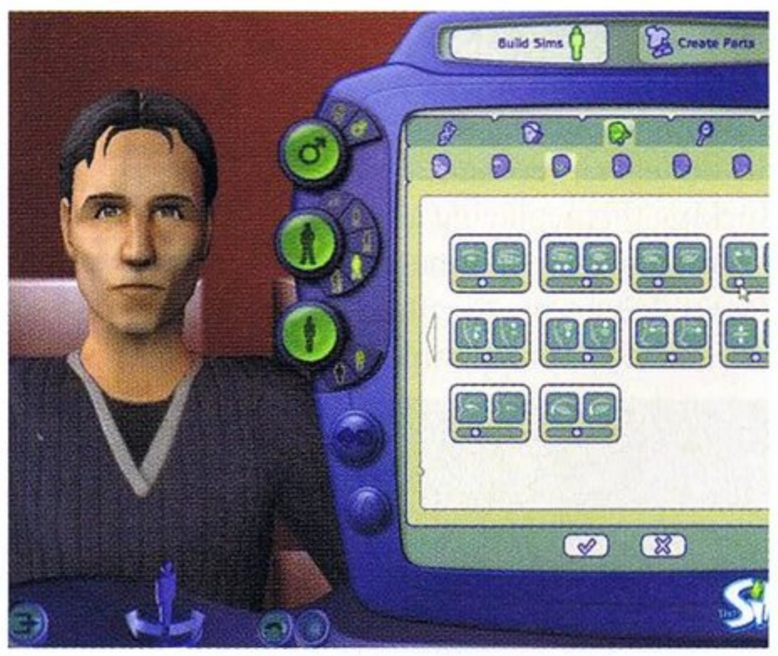
04 HAIR TODAY

Next, look for the small genetic icon and give it a click. This reveals three options: Skin Tone, Eye Colour, and Hair. First, skin tone: give your Editor the pinkest tone in the palette. For the eyes, he needs brown. Next comes a very contentious issue – the hair. Unfortunately the Body Shop currently does not support long hair on male Sims – tsk. Therefore we must ask Mark to cut his hair for the purpose of this tutorial. Select the top left hair type and make it black.



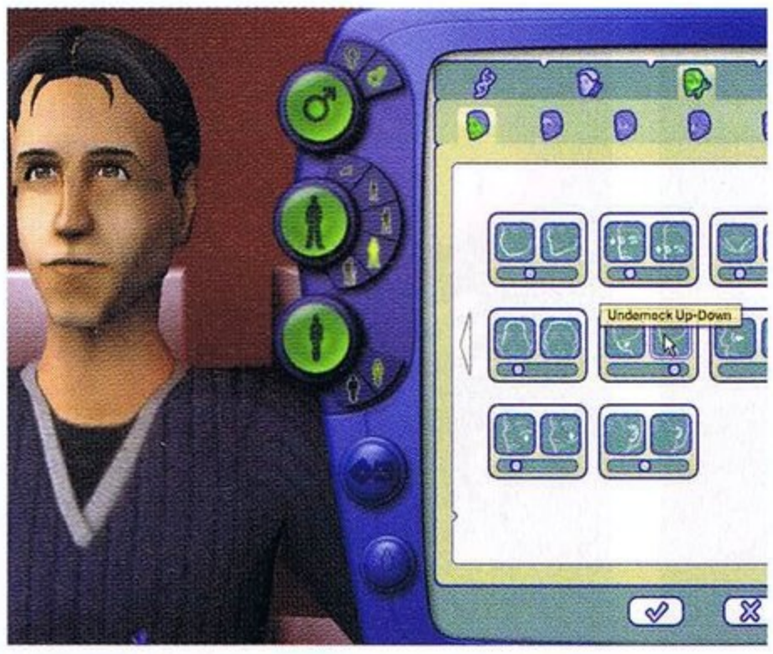
05 HEAD MASTER

Now the fun bit. Select the 'Faces' icon and, using the on-disc photo as a guide, choose the most appropriate face type. Face types are good to get an initial face shape. Using the 'next' arrow scroll the choices along to the next set of eight. Move the slider of the top right face type to the right. Your Sim will now take this form. To add a little roundness use the 'previous' arrow and go backwards. Now move the slider of the first face type to halfway.



06 COTTON EYE JOE

Click on the 'Modifiers' icon. You will notice many different sculpting sections in which you can mould the head of our associate editor. Each is based on a section of the head and has sliders with helpful diagrams. It is best to start with the eyes and brow. Use all the sliders to subtly adjust the eyes. Notice the position of Mark's eyes in relation to his head, and also modify their size regarding width and narrowness. Repeat for the eyebrows.



07 PLASTIC SURGEON

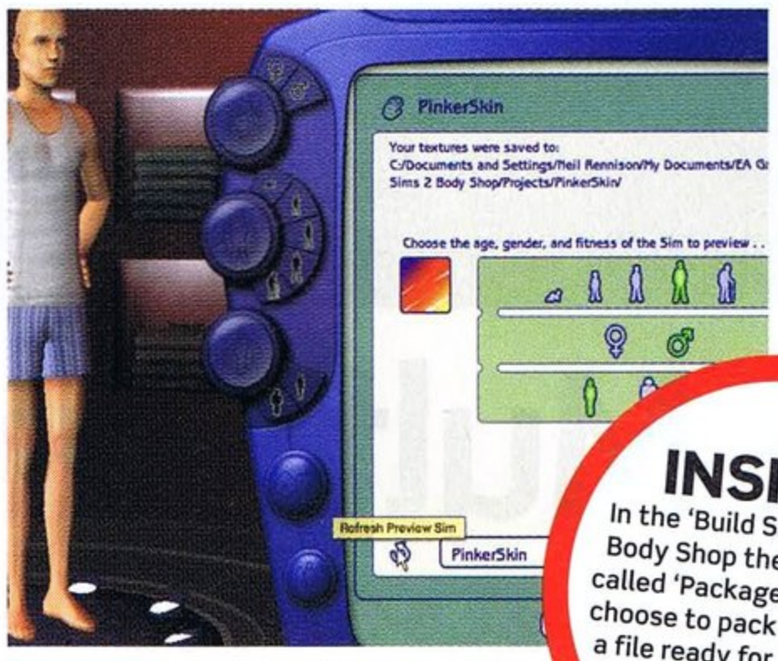
Time to play around with the rest of Mark's face. It's best to change the 'Face' options first so you can get his shape about right. A useful slider is 'Face Short-Long' which adjusts where the face sits on the head – move that a little to the left. Also make sure that 'Underneck Up-Down' is moved to the far right. When you are happy, move on to changing the jaw, followed by the mouth, and then the nose. You should be able to roughly match the photo.

08 HIDE THE RAZORS

Click on the 'Facial Hair, Makeup and Glasses' icon and give your Sim some stubble and a little bit of lipstick to bring out his lips. Purely for aesthetic reasons, of course. Now click 'Clothing' and for the moment select 'Everyday' clothes and choose the short-sleeved shirt (as worn by Mark in the photo). We can add more shirt buttons later. Also choose a pair of combats. When you are happy click on the tick at the button called 'Done Building Sim'.

09 SKIN DEEP

Now we need to customise some aspects of our Editor, so select 'Create Parts' followed by 'Start New Project'. We want to give him a pinker complexion so select 'Genetics', and then choose the lightest skin. Once highlighted in green click on the 'Export Selected Textures' icon. Call it 'PinkerSkin'. A project folder will now be created in My Documents/EA Games/The Sims 2 Body Shop/Projects/ and the cloned skin will be in the PinkerSkin folder.

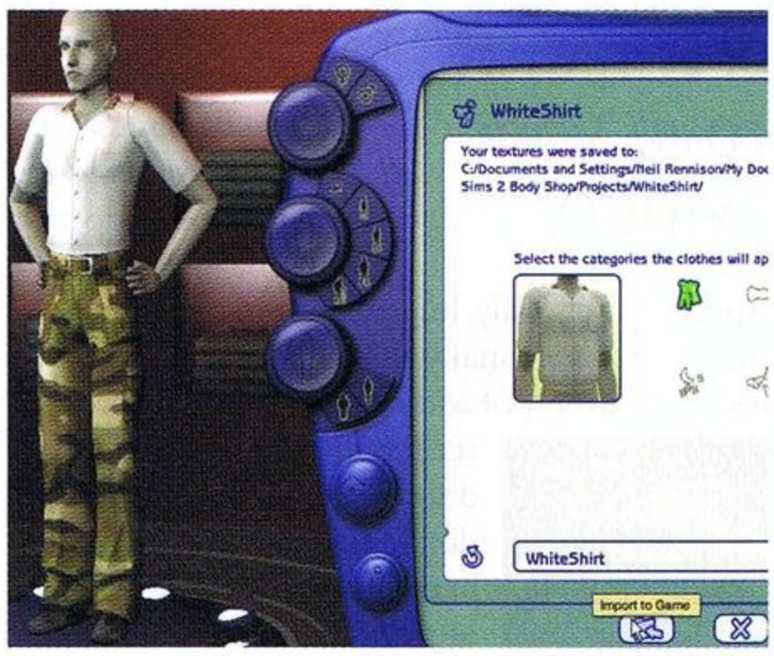

PinkerSkin
Your textures were saved to:
C:/Documents and Settings/Neil Rennison/My Documents/EA G
Sims 2 Body Shop/Projects/PinkerSkin/
Choose the age, gender, and fitness of the Sim to preview . .
Refresh Preview Sim
PinkerSkin

10 PINKY BUT PERKY

In your favourite art package open that folder and load up the textures ambodynormal~top~stdMatBaseTextureName.bmp and amface~face~stdMatBaseTextureName.bmp. Make both of these lighter and pinker. Go back to Body Shop, and making sure you have selected the right age, sex, and body type, click on 'Refresh Preview Sim' to see your new skin colour and then 'Import to Game'.

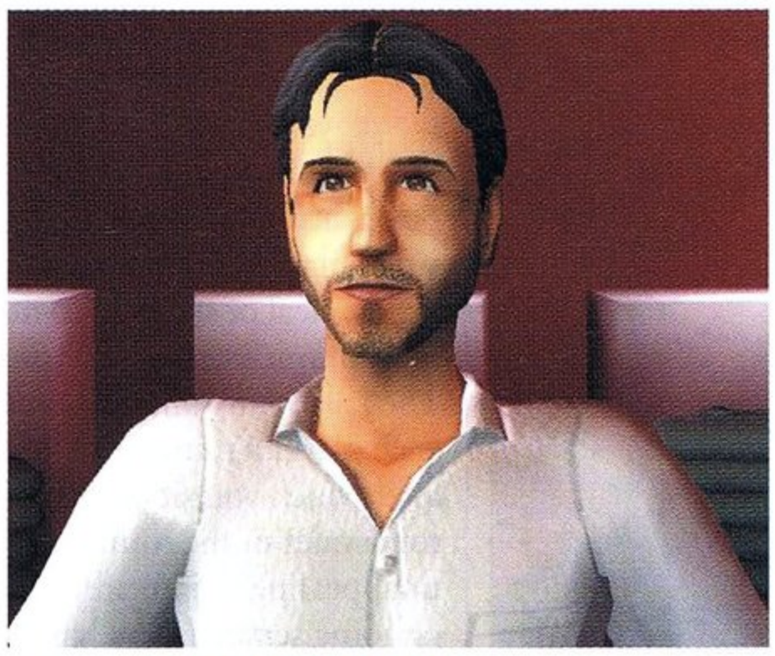
INSIGHT

In the 'Build Sims' section of Body Shop there is a section called 'Package Sims'. You can choose to pack up your Sim to a file ready for *The Sims 2*, or send it with a description to TheSims2.com.



11 GETTING SHIRTY

Now do the same thing for the clothing. This time, export the short-sleeved shirt we selected earlier as 'WhiteShirt', and in the directory you should be able to find a file named top~stdMatBaseTextureName.bmp that you can edit. Add all the buttons down the front and also the breast pocket. You can also edit the bump map top~stdMatNormalMapTextureName.bmp to make the buttons stand out more. Remember to refresh and import in Body Shop.



12 MARK MARK II

Your virtual journalist is nearly complete. Go back to the Sim Bin and you will see your previously built Sim as an icon. Select the icon and click 'Clone Selected Sim' and your sim will now be copied ready for re-editing. Go to the Skin section in Genetics' and select your new PinkerSkin, and then finally go to the Clothing section and your WhiteShirt should now be selectable. Et voila! Mark is finally completed. What a handsome chap. Nice lipstick, mate.

Design Law Debunked

Not a rule "Games must provide challenges"

Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

Halfway through watching The Mechanic (you know, the actually good Michael Winner film) the idea occured that it would make an interesting game. This was just at the point where a hit has gone wrong and Charles Bronson has to chase one of the targets on a motorbike. So they go haring through hedges, past a poolside party, across a busy road, etc.

And then it struck me: "This is the bit that would spoil the game."

The early part would be great. You'd get to stalk targets and watch their routine. Plant a bomb, poison their pizza, or just take a potshot at them.

But then suddenly there'd be the damned cut-scene where the remaining target runs out. He jumps on his motorbike and you're back in the game just in time to see him disappearing down the driveway. How many times would you have to run to get your own bike? How many hedges would you have to ride through? How many times would you have to crash that pool party and memorize the traffic on the road?

And why? Because if you don't catch that guy, you're not going to be allowed into the next part of the story.

It's not that I mind having challenges set for me. I just object if I'm obliged to do them before I can get to more interesting options. It's the way you'd expect a schoolteacher to design a game: it's got to be formal and structured, with rewards that you have to earn.

The guys who design the attractions at Disneyland don't do it that way. They figure we're there to have fun, not to be set challenges. In the case of all other entertainment – whether interactive or not – I don't have to train myself in a succession of tasks in order to unlock the fun I've already paid for.

A game is something you win or lose. Play is something you enjoy. Which would you rather be doing?

■ **This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop**

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMES ADDICT? Then contact:

dan@derwenthoward.com.au

Deathmatch started with *Doom*. *Doom 3*, however, has some catching up to do.

Doom 3 Multiplayer

Is there Extra Life on Mars? Magic 8-Ball says: "Ask again later."

LONG PLAY
A first look at what *Doom 3* has to offer us online

Doom 3 has only been on sale for a few weeks at the time of writing, so gamers are still getting to grips with the game's somewhat 'streamlined' online mode. We're limited to these five out-of-the-box maps and four game types until some serious mods come along – which won't happen until id release the SDK to allow modders to tinker properly.

We were never expecting great things from *Doom 3*'s core multiplayer – id Software's intention was always to make a singleplayer game. Thus the unmodified version is a simple affair lacking many of the tricks we've seen in *Call of Duty*, *UT 2004* and their multifarious mods. While the map limit of four players has been quickly reversed by cunning server hosts, we've yet to see significant changes to id's original vision.

Deathmatch should be your first port of call to familiarise yourself with the maps and get a feel for the online usefulness of the weapons, and it's by far the most-played game type.

Team Deathmatch is also popular, although the small maps don't facilitate a great deal of strategy, so don't expect to find much organised action here. The Last Man Standing mode gives each player a number of lives, after which you sit out the remainder of the round. It's unappealing to join an ongoing server as you have to wait for a round to finish – which can be a long time. Tourney is best for a one-on-one duel – challenge your mate, password a server, and prove your virility.

Password a server, and prove your virility

At its best, *Doom 3* multiplayer rewards the skills of old deathmatch hands such as our Jim Rossignol. With good framerates and a low-lag server, superior speed and accuracy will still give you the edge.

Like *Quake* and *Quake II*, *Doom 3*'s five maps are unembellished by open spaces. The lighting is, naturally, hugely impressive, and you'll occasionally gain a tactical advantage if you spot someone's shadow before you see them. However, quality deathmatch and great lighting don't typically go hand-in-hand, and the preponderance of pitch-black shadows on 'Lights Out' in particular doesn't sit well with the frenetic weapons. The office fave is TheEdge2, a tribute to

Played by
Ross Atherton
Played For
Two weeks

Want to see a classic game revisited in PCGA? Send your links to:
pcga@derwenthoward.com.au

■ **Publisher** Activision ■ **Developer** id Software ■ **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 384Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ **Multiplayer** LAN or internet, up to 32 players ■ **Link** www.doom3.com
■ **Community** www.planetdoom.com ■ **Influenced by** Doom series, Half-Life, Quake series ■ **Spiritual successor** Not yet ■ **Get it from** All good game shops

Think you can do better? The arrival of the *Doom 3* SDK will give the fan community its chance.

Unsurprisingly, the special effects and lighting on offer are the very best currently available in a multiplayer shooter.

Quake II's fine map, which comes complete with rocket launcher and Berserk pickup.

What we really want to see are slightly larger maps, without the dark areas which seem to preoccupy id so much – great in singleplayer, but a pain in the rear when 12-year-olds are camping in them with rocket launchers. The arrival of the SDK will, we're sure, herald a whole new world of *Doom 3* multiplayer.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review PCGA 25, 91%
Why now? It's one of the big FPS games of the year
A slow start for Doom 3 online, but it'll only get better

X-COM

Alien invasion? Happens every 12 months around here

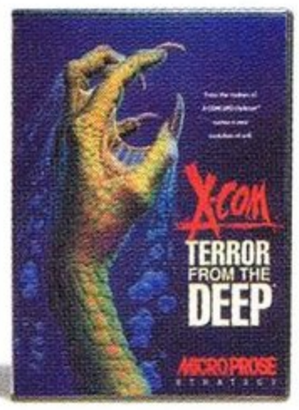
Terror from the Deep submerged *X-COM* in a scary underwater world.

Al assures us it's not as hard as it looks.

Annually and without fail, I get an itch that only two games can scratch. It's not the sort of thing the doctor can give me cream for (and believe me, he gets bored of my asking). *UFO: Enemy Unknown* and its sequel, *X-COM: Terror From The Deep*, are my itch-scratchers. The only games to ever provide me with such a sublime melding of strategy, tech-tree research, resource management, RPG character progression, B-movie alien invasion and turn-based squad-level combat with whizzy ray-guns.

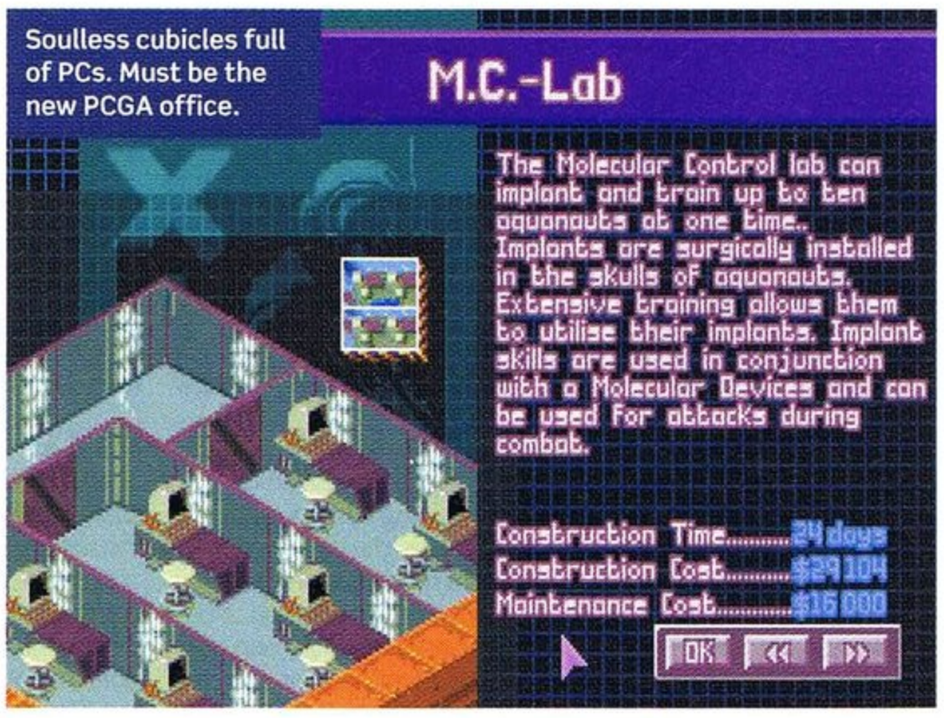
Enemy Unknown, the original and best, sees the earth beset by alien incursion, and as the head of X-COM (the extra-terrestrial combat unit) it's your task to repel it. You begin with a rudimentary base housing your soldiers, scientists, engineers and fighter craft. It further offers the capability to research new technologies, build new weapons for your soldiers, and enables you to launch fighters that can shoot down invading UFOs. Against a dark background of mass abductions and grisly experiments on live humans, a pattern soon emerges: you intercept UFOs, send soldiers to the crash sight, engage in firefights with the surviving aliens, then haul the wreckage, corpses and alien equipment back to base for the Tefal-heads to analyse. Soon, you're reverse-engineering alien technology, and fusing it with terrestrial principles to create weapons, body armour, aircraft and equipment that equal and eventually outperform alien tech. Which is rather handy, as the enemy advances at an alarming rate.

Played by
Al Bickham
Played For
Eight years



Terror, it must be noted, is all but identical. There are a few more kinks and chicanes to the tech tree, there are different aliens and missions, and the whole thing's set on the ocean floor, but it's essentially the same gig.

Saying that these games have great replay value doesn't do them justice. They're a part of my history; like favourite books I re-read every once in a while. Or more accurately, a photo album – I know every image contained therein, but they still bring me pleasure to look at, a pleasure which only a recognition, or remembrance, of past experience can bring.


M.C.-Lab
The Molecular Control lab can implant and train up to ten aquanauts at one time. Implants are surgically installed in the skulls of aquanauts. Extensive training allows them to utilise their implants. Implant skills are used in conjunction with a Molecular Devices and can be used for attacks during combat.
Construction Time.....24 days
Construction Cost.....$29 104
Maintenance Cost.....$16 000
OK

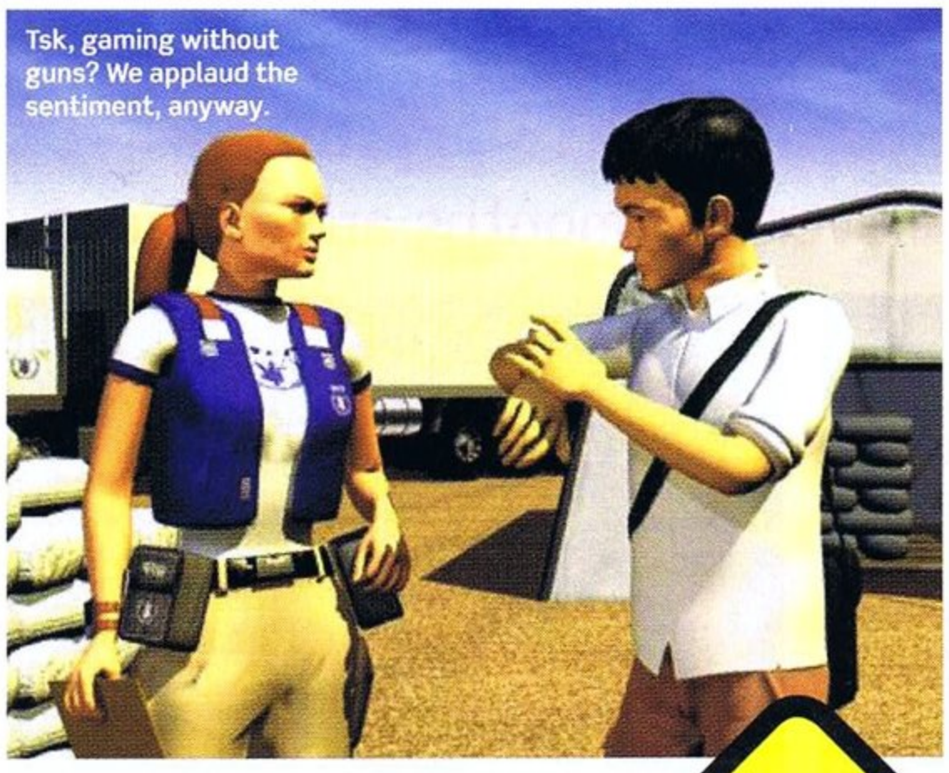
Soulless cubicles full of PCs. Must be the new PCGA office.

PCGAMES README

DATA FLOW

First review N/A
Why now? They're available as abandonware
An essential classic for turn-based strategy buffs and anyone who loves great games

■ **Price** Free! ■ **Publisher** Microprose ■ **Developer** Nick and Julian Gollop ■ **Requires** Windows 95 or higher
■ **Link** http://home.c2i.net/w-257478/his.htm ■ **Spiritual successor** Laser Squad Nemesis ■ **Get it from** www.abandonware-france.org



CULTURE

Gaming that helps to nourish young minds

FOOD AID

Feed the world

The UN turns to gaming to spread the word

Cutting through the recent hysteria like a machete-wielding Bob Geldof, *Food Force* is an example of videogaming using its alleged power to warp young minds for the good of mankind. Commissioned by the UN's World Food Programme, the game is designed to educate youngsters on the work of the agency. Far from being just a lecture in gaming form, *Food Force* first introduces the player to a number of aid-distributing NPCs and then gives them the opportunity to work alongside them in six missions, each with its own distinctive mode of play. Air Surveillance puts players aboard a chopper, scouting for the hungry over the island country of Shaylan before dropping off food parcels from the sky. The Food Run follows – a convoy style driving mission – before the player indulges in some *SimCity* style management in Future Farming as they help Aid forces to restore the island's resource stocks.

Players will get feedback on their performance after each mission and high scores can be uploaded to the *Food Force* website. Originally planned as a US-only CD-ROM campaign, *Food Force* will now be freely distributed worldwide via the electric miracle web this month.

■ www.playerthree.net

ON THE DVD Get acquainted with the *Food Force* team and their good work in this movie trailer > Movies

COFFIN DODGING

CASKET CASE

Away from the tournaments at this year's QuakeCon, a quieter but equally competitive contest was taking place. The case modding competition included almost 100 unique entries ranging from a simple themed *Doom 3* case to cardboard boxes and three-foot robots. Hogging the admiring glances was a rather striking case that appeared to be soldered onto the body of a lawnmower. Impressive, but not a patch on last year's winner which we thought we'd dig up for cryptic reasons. Yes, it's a PC in a coffin, and yes, it's a child's coffin. Ick. A lovely bit of craftsmanship, but it could put a dampener on things when you wheeled it out at your local LAN shouting "Multiplayer *Worms* anyone?" More QuakeCon cases on the disc (Galleries) and at http://tinyurl.com/4ezrp.

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
dan@derwenthoward.com.au

RUDE AID

Playboy bunnies

We're assured it's integral to the plot

Rayne, the voluptuous, vampiric Nazi-killer of third-person shooter *BloodRayne*, graced the pages of Playboy (US) in her digitised form. A milestone in the rise of gaming as a cultural phenomenon, or just a clever way of hyping the forthcoming *BloodRayne 2*? Your call. Printed in the October issue, there's no doubt that Rayne's plentiful polygons sat nicely next to the magazine's other, only slightly more organic, models.

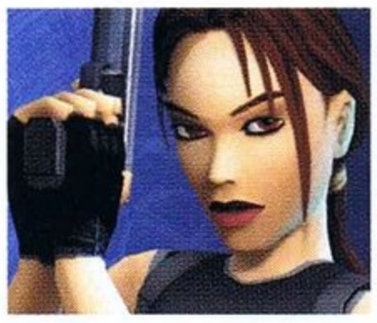
Whatever next? *Who*ever next? We couldn't resist have an office conflab about other potential bunnies in the digital world. Ms Rayne looks like half of our ed's exes, find our other choices below.

■ www.bloodrayne2.com

CATE ARCHER

Cate, 23, from Scotland, likes spying, shooting and horse-riding. Her favourite TV show is The Avengers, her favourite film is Modesty Blaise, and her lucky number is 21. Her ambition is to rid the world of international evil, and then marry into royalty.

Picked by: Craig



LARA CROFT

Lara, 26, has a passion for endangering species, particularly the male kind. She's a renowned antique collector, and rumoured to be replacing David Dickinson on Bargain Hunt – just as soon as his casting as the new Indiana Jones lead is confirmed.

Picked by: Tim

ALYX

Alyx, 19, is as smart as she is alluring, with brains to match those beautiful eyes. Her ambition is world peace. And, yes, boys, she's single and has a thing for geeks. But she doesn't play around, so expect to be met with resistance if you're not a Free Man.

Picked by: Ross

STA'RY

Sta'Ry, 18, from Talus, is the winner of Miss Galaxies 2004. Her hirsute charms and glossy coat are attributed to an exclusive Pedigree Chum diet. She certainly has the pedigree to win our hearts. Just as long as long as she stays off the couch, anyway.

Picked by: James Cottee

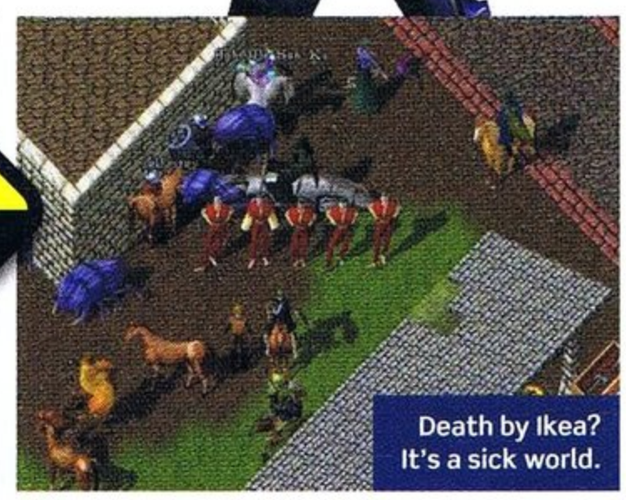
GRIEFERS

Breaking the law

Online subversion rife in MMOs

Griefing, the act of deliberately causing trouble in online games, isn't big. It isn't clever, and it certainly isn't hard. But by gum, it is absolutely hilarious. Kids, don't try this at home. Try it online instead. Just don't blame us when they cancel your account.

In *Ultima Online*, squadrons of drive-by carpenters have been causing havoc, catching unwary adventurers by surprise. They'll sidle up beside lonely warriors, and whip up tables, cupboards and beds using their crafting skills, creating an elaborate flat-pack prison. Since you can't move furniture in *UO*, the only way to escape from this pine dungeon is to petition a local game-master. Beware the chippies.



Death by Ikea? It's a sick world.

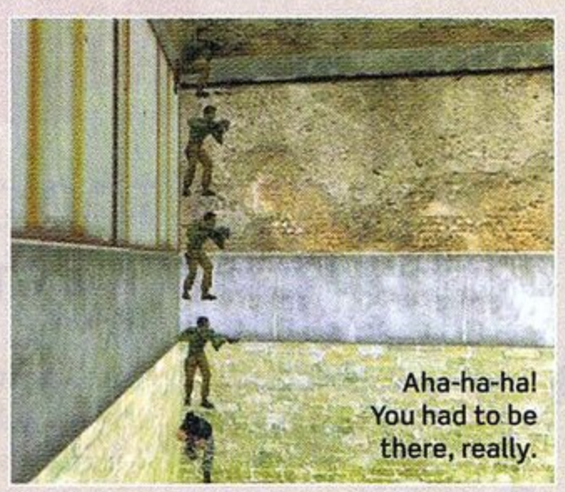
Meanwhile, amateur gameshow hosts have interrupted hostilities in *PlanetSide* with their own version of Survivor. Players will pick up a Galaxy-load of battle-hardened troopers and then fly off shore and into the sea. The passengers are then asked to vote: who gets kicked out first? The pilot boots out the least popular player, until only one remains. No, it's not exactly playing fair. But you've got to see the funny side.

"Ooh, and she missed! OK, Bully, let's see what she could have won..."

■ www.planetside.com
■ www.uo.com

BOMB'D

PUBMASTERS



Aha-ha-ha! You had to be there, really.

Competitive gaming needs personalities if it is to grow. That's the opinion of an increasing number of commentators, worried that the incestuous transfer market and nigh-on impenetrable jargon limit the potential of the scene. Clearly, the sport needs its own Harlem Globetrotters; players who can reach a whole new audience by fooling around.

They exist. They're called the Pubmasters – a US based *Counter-Strike* clan who've cooked up some 'unorthodox' strategies. Such as: standing on each other's shoulders and carefully advancing on enemy positions, like a comedy siege tower. Such as: pretending to be Away From Keyboard during a high-pressure clan match. Such as: hiding the entire team behind a single crate, and waiting until the opposition have trotted past before sneaking up behind them.

But our absolute favourite has to be the tactic they pioneered on de_nuke. By building a human tower underneath bombsite A, they're able to defuse a planted bomb *from the room below*. Their movie on their website has to be seen to be believed.

■ http://pubmasters.the1337.com

WHY I LOVE...

›**Game** Doom 3 ›**Gamer** Tim Edwards ›**Love affair** Gibbing the recently deceased

BLOWING ZOMBIES AWAY IN DOOM 3

Tim Edwards can't get enough of those lovely braaaaains

The root of my problem is fear. Fear of surprise, fear of the unknown, fear of backing into the outstretched arms of an overweight, animated stiff. This is why I just can't leave a good corpse alone.

Doom 3 loves to throw enemies at you. It spawns them everywhere: in front, to the side, behind. Imps crash through the pipes and walls, trites scuttle from underneath boxes and overturned desks. Pinkies launch their way through hardened glass, and even batter their way through once solid doors, just to feast on your wretched guts. It's not a pleasant feeling.

So, I've taken to preparing. As I leave each room, or pass through a corridor, I'll block the exits, using chairs and tables as barricades. I'll stuff crates into every conceivable entry point. I'll even eye the walls with suspicion – in the back of my mind, I figure the legions of Hell have no regard for solid steel. If there's a lone marine, terrified to the core, walking through their domain, they'll find some way of leaping out at him.

My major obsession is reserved for corpses. The first hellish shockwave turned half of the human inhabitants of the base into mobile flesh-eaters. The rest have been left to rot. When I pass a dead 'un on my travels, I'll immediately plug three or four pistol rounds into his skull, letting his brain dribble out of the back of his head. Why? Because if I don't get there first, he's going to waddle to his feet, and chase *me* down. This is survival of the fittest. Or the least dead.

1 JOIN THE MARINE CORPS
Welcome to corpse central. A number of dead guys here, and a limited supply of ammunition. If I use the pistol, I can blast a couple into a heap in the centre of the room, and gib them all with a grenade. This is what videogames scientists and pretentious journalists call 'emergent', apparently.

2 FLEE THE MARINE CORPSE
Ooh, cripes in a biscuit, they've only gone and woken up. This is why I can only play this game for short bursts... every time I think I've got a handle on the situation, something happens to cheerfully freak me out. Inside, I'm weak. Where's the grenade? *Where the hell's that grenade*? Mum!

EXPERT ADVICE ON MP3 PLAYERS

For the quiet moments when you're not gaming

BY TIM EDWARDS & HARDWARE EDITOR: JERE LAWRENCE

You're a gamer, therefore you need an MP3 player. Why? Because they're fun toys: your entire music collection in something the size of an Aero. The MP3 rebellion has changed *everything*. Music on the go is no longer a chore of juggling mix-tapes, blank minidiscs and skip-prone CDs. For gamers, MP3 players are equally useful objects: gigabytes worth of hard drive space that can be slipped into your pocket. Mods, maps, patches, documents, guides, demos, contacts and pictures, anything in a digital format can be dragged and dropped into a player, and easily transferred from computer to computer. This is one technological revolution that's worth joining.

Before you even consider buying an MP3 player, you'll need to prepare. The various brands and models differ so wildly in their price, features, connectivity and quality that the selection process can appear hugely daunting. That's where Apple do well, of course: the iPod name has become synonymous with 'MP3 player' in the same way that 'Walkman' became shorthand for 'personal cassette player' in the '80s. But fashion disguises the very real technical issues. The major dilemma you'll face concerns cabling. Connection to your PC is via either Firewire or USB 2.0. Firewire is the superior connection, even though the quoted transfer rates would seem to show otherwise: 480Mbps for USB 2.0 compared to 400Mbps for Firewire. But Firewire is a more intelligent connection – it actively talks back to your PC, negotiating transfers. USB 2.0 relies on your PC for everything – making it up to somewhere between 33 and 50 percent slower. Do check that the device's connection matches the ports on the back of your PC. While USB is ubiquitous, Firewire most certainly is not.

Along with connectivity, you need to consider battery life. A minor online kafuffle was caused last year when Apple's 'dirty secret' was revealed – that the lithium ion batteries within the iPod can rapidly degrade with constant draining and recharging. Eventually, the batteries are shot, leading to a frustrated call to technical support and the horrific realisation that replacements cost $210 or so. This situation isn't limited to the iPod, since every device with a lithium ion battery can suffer similar problems. You also need to bear in mind that the battery lives quoted by hardware manufacturers are devised under laboratory conditions, and can deviate wildly from typical usage. Take the time they give, and knock a third off, and you'll come up with a rather more realistic figure.

Along with these obvious functional concerns you also need to be aware that owning an MP3 player will profoundly alter the way you listen to music on the PC. Each manufacturer will want install its own idiosyncratic software, for instance, which can raise some incompatibility issues. iTunes, Apple's own media player, plays and rips certain file formats: MP3s and AAC, and refuses to kowtow to Microsoft's WMA format. On the other side of the fence, Windows Media Player will automatically convert your music to WMA files when you insert a CD into your computer, yet won't recognise any music encoded as an AAC. The blame for this ridiculous situations lies with vast software corporations who still hold grudges. Why is all this important? For a start, the hardware suffers from a similar lack of compatibility as the software. iPods won't play WMA files, Creative's Zen won't play AAC files, the iRiver will play MP3s, WMAs and the superior, but currently rare OGG format. There are workarounds – the latest version of iTunes will convert songs in WMA to its native AAC, while you can buy codecs that do the opposite for Windows Media Player, or use the freeware Audiograbber. But conversion is a laborious, time-consuming process and results in your music sounding muddy, like it's playing through a submerged ghetto blaster. Better to plan ahead. This issue is most acute when buying music online. Tracks from Sony's Connect store, for instance, are encoded in a format that renders them impossible to play on anything but Sony's own products. The reason? Because these file formats include Digital Rights Management, or DRM, making it impossible to share music between computers. Before you hand over your credit card details, check any

SOUND SYSTEM
Organising your Music Library can be a real pain. Most MP3 players import the track names and artists, but how they're arranged within the library depends on the player's own quirks. Few, for instance, will allow you to create playlists 'on the fly', that's to say, you won't be able to save the order in which you listened to the music for a later date unless you queue up the tracks in a PC, and then import that listing.

BIGGER, BETTER
As a rough guide to hard drive space: every minute of audio equals about a megabyte of storage when encoded at 128Kbps compression rates. So that's around 4Mb per track, for a four minute pop tune.

NEVER READY
Lithium Ion batteries like those within the iPod and Zen demand care and attention. Don't leave your MP3 player plugged in when it's fully charged, or you'll cause a heat build up that can inflict irreparable damage.

iPods won't play WMA, the Zen won't play AAC

SYSTEMS README

›**WHY AM I HERE?** Because we're living in the digital age, and you want to play your music using the best technology

›**COOL FACTOR?** Get the right system, and you'll be as cool as

A Linux geek | A weak lemon drink | A pair of shades | Jazz | A cucumber | Tony's cat

›**IS IT EASY?** Musically speaking, it's as tricky to master as

Sk8 | Disco | Country | House | Metal | Classical music

›**SELL IT TO ME...** Today's MP3 players allow you to carry your entire music collection wherever you go. Enough said.

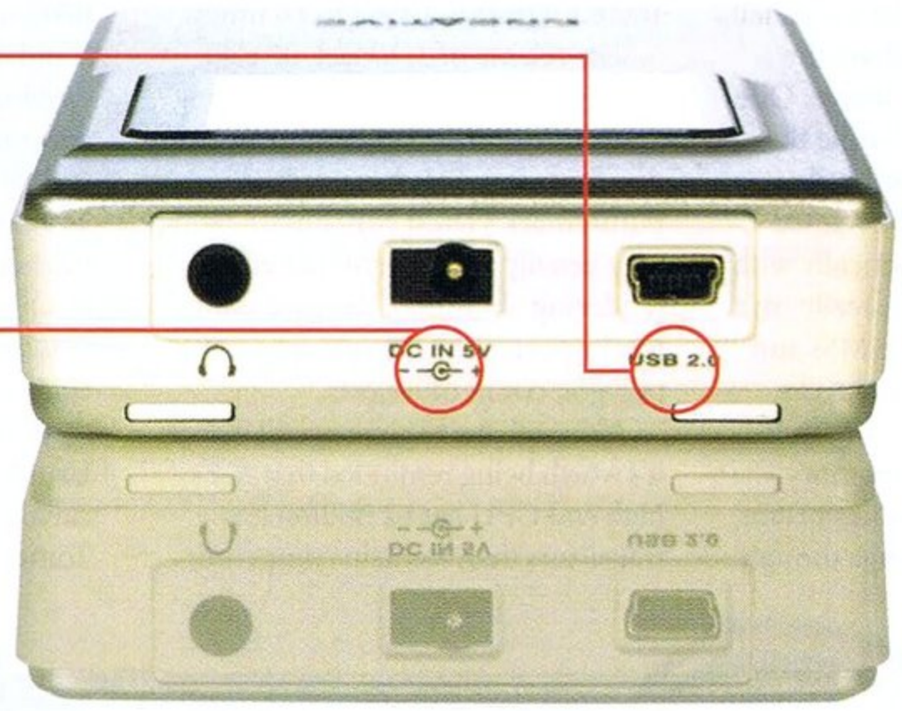
PCGAMES ADDICT DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

Bitrate › The quality of the recording; the higher the better. Bitrates measure the amount of data used to encode your music.
File Format › MP3 is old news. Digital music stores offer files in AAC and WMA formats, rather than vanilla MP3s, allowing them to protect music with DRM.
Codec › File formats are not the end of the story. Codecs allow for a variety of different compression methods within a single format. DivX is an example: it slots into the mpg movie format allowing high quality images and Surround Sound without sacrificing file size.
DRM › Digital Rights Management covers a wide range of technologies used to prevent unauthorised file copying and sharing. DRM-protected tracks refuse to play on computers other than those of their owners.

DON'T STOP
One quirk of the Creative Zen player is that there's no Stop button. When you've finished listening, you just turn it off.

ROCK ON
How you select your music to play is vitally important. Scrollers and thumbwheels are far better than a simple set of cursor arrows.

SILVER SURFER
Don't ignore the aesthetics. Shiny players make you feel good about your place in the world. Yes, it's shallow. But it's also important.



GET CONNECTED
Check that you have the appropriate ports before you buy. USB 2.0 is faster than vanilla USB, and backwards compatible with all devices.

POWER UP
If you plan to use your MP3 player abroad it's worth investing in a universal power supply. Your battery isn't going to last for an entire beach-ridden fortnight.

FAQs on the site.

This is before we even get to the relative merits of each format. True CD quality sound requires over a megabyte of data storage per second of play. To achieve the three or four megabytes of a typical MP3, the data is compressed, firstly by chopping out the frequencies that the human ear can't hear, then by converting endless repeating streams of data into simple symbols: imagine a 100101010101 converted to a single letter x, reducing the length of the code. This inevitably affects the quality of the sound: while most manufacturers consider 128Kbps (that's 128K per second of sound) an appropriate bitrate, this results in a major drop in sound quality, and a 'whooshing' at the edge of the sound. Better to fiddle around in your preferences and encode your music at 192Kbps, the maximum permissible in Windows Media Player. The difference in size is acceptable given the improvement in quality, but each file will take up a third again as much disc space. If you're downloading music from online sources, it's smart to check the bitrate first: to save space and bandwidth, filesharers and some MP3 shops will drop quality to pre-AM standards. If you're paying for music you want to play a lot, quality matters, especially if you're using a power amp.

Resolving these issues is a matter of considering your current situation. If you already have a library of music encoded then your choice is limited to a player that supports your format, unless you're prepared for a conversion marathon. If you're a new recruit to the MP3 army, everything is fine. Scoop your brain back up and order the shiniest, loudest player you can find.

Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
jerel@derwenthoward.com.au

MASTERCLASS

Where to find... The best music on the web

We love iTunes' simplicity, but it's technically inept.

PAY SITES

iTunes Apple's own site, and the first stop for iPod owners. Fast download and the largest selection of the corporate sites, but not exhaustive. **Cost** $1.42/track www.itunes.com
Napster The naughty schoolboy goes legit. The software can be a pain, but the selection is massive, and subscribers enjoy the sense of community. **Cost** $1.35/track www.napster.com
BigPond Music With over 500,000 titles on offer, BigPond Music is highly competitive. You can opt to have purchases added to your monthly bill. **Cost** $1.89/track www.bigpondmusic.com.au

FREEBIES

Amazon US The online superstore offers a wide range of free single tracks, and entire albums from unsigned musicians. Worth a browse. www.amazon.com/music
Fluxblog Media surfers should check this site daily. Along with some gloriously sardonic commentary, it hosts plenty of recommendations and single MP3 tracks. http://newflux.blogspot.com
MP3.Com.Au A fast, highly polished site that offers thousands of tracks from Australian indie artists. http://www.mp3.com.au

DODGY

Soulseek
An extraordinary file-sharing community. Users distribute their music within rooms – you can opt to password protect your own private gathering. www.slsknet.org

The cheeky Napster people are now legit.

WHAT NEXT...?

› Get round the back of your PC. Do you have a USB or a Firewire port?
› **Check your MP3 player can handle WMA files (ipod doesn't). This is the Windows Media Player format and is present on most PCs.**
› Experiment with pay-for digital downloads. Seek out a copy of Windows Media Player (www.windowsmedia.com) or iTunes (www.itunes.com). Expect to pay around $1.50 cents per track.

PCI Express or PCI Excess?

MSI RX800XT PCI EXPRESS

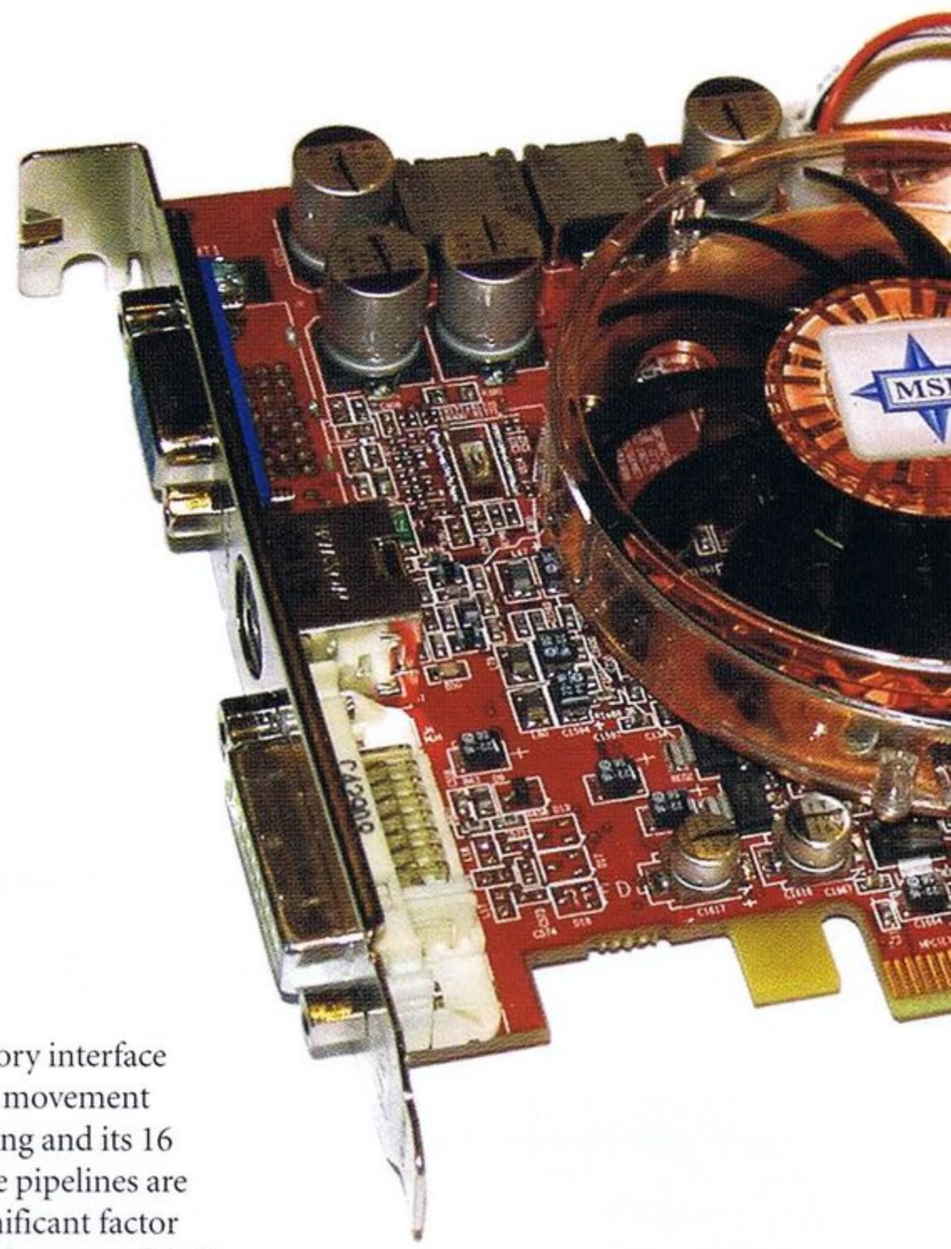
$979

MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070

SAPPHIRE RX800XT PCI EXPRESS

$899

Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288



Since the inauguration of PCI Express, the most predominant question that remains to be answered is if any immediate performance gain will be received from the new interface. Unfortunately the answer is predominantly - No, as the PCI Express X800XT benches only moderately faster than the AGP version. But that's not to say that PCI Express is useless - it's future proof.

At 16x speed, PCI Express offers double the bandwidth of AGP along with separate busses for read and write operations. This allows it to move up to 8.0GB/s of data bi-directionally and completely blitzes the 2.1GB/sec of AGP 8x. Unfortunately, the amount of data transferred in today's games hasn't yet breached 2.0GB/sec, which is why we're not as yet seeing any significant increases in PCIE over AGP. One area however, where PCI Express offers a huge advantage to the X800XT is in its ability to process HDTV. There's just so much data transmitted in these high definition signals that it quickly fills an AGP bus.

The other advantage over AGP is that PCI Express is not limited to just one port. What this means is that multiple PCI Express video cards can be used in one machine. In a nutshell, two cards will be able to share the burden of processing the image. One card renders the first half while the other renders the other and voila, you've doubled your performance.

Benching virtually identically with a 3DMark05 of 4042 there really isn't any difference between the MSI and Sapphire cards. Both feature ATi's R420 chipset with a GPU core speed of 520Mhz and GDDR3 memory running at 1120Mhz. The important aspects of the X800XT range though are the 256-bit memory interface which allows for fast movement of textures and lighting and its 16 pixel pipelines. These pipelines are becoming a very significant factor in benchmark scores because of their high use in shader intensive games. And indeed when running Doom 3 the X800XT was able to render 42 frames per second at a resolution of 1600x1200 with AA set to 16 times!

The release of 3D Mark 05 also highlights the inroads that are being made in video processing over CPU development. This has resulted in Futuremark's latest benchmark being very heavily focussed on the effects rendering abilities of the card with less importance being placed on the polygon count of objects.

Although we've gone over it before it's worth being reminded that ATi's high end GPU has 62 million less transistors than its main competitor the FX6800. The reason for a smaller GPU is because the R420 chipset only supports Shader Model 2.0b and not the newer Shader Model 3.0 that the 6800 supports. Whether or not the 3.0 standard will be embraced by game developers depends ultimately on consumer demand and if more high end ATi cards sell than nVIDIA ones you can bet development won't extend further than Shader model 2.0b.

Overall the only real difference between the MSI and Sapphire card is price and software bundle. MSI's card ships with XIII, Prince of Persia and Uru: Myst Online while the Sapphire card comes with just Pandora Tomorow and Prince of Persia.

PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

Msi RX00XT PCI EXPRESS

PCGAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 93%
VALUE 70%

88%

›For both the novice and the hardcore

SAPPHIRE RX 800XT PCI EXPRESS

PCGAMES ADDICT

PERFORMANCE 93%
VALUE 78%

91%

›Not cheap, but a truly great card

The PCI Express iteration of the X800XT is perfect for HDTV editing because of the new busses 8.0GB/sec of available bandwidth

Note the huge amount of particles being rendered in this 3DMark05 test. These particles are able to reduce lesser cards to 2 frames per second but the RX800XT can maintain 16.

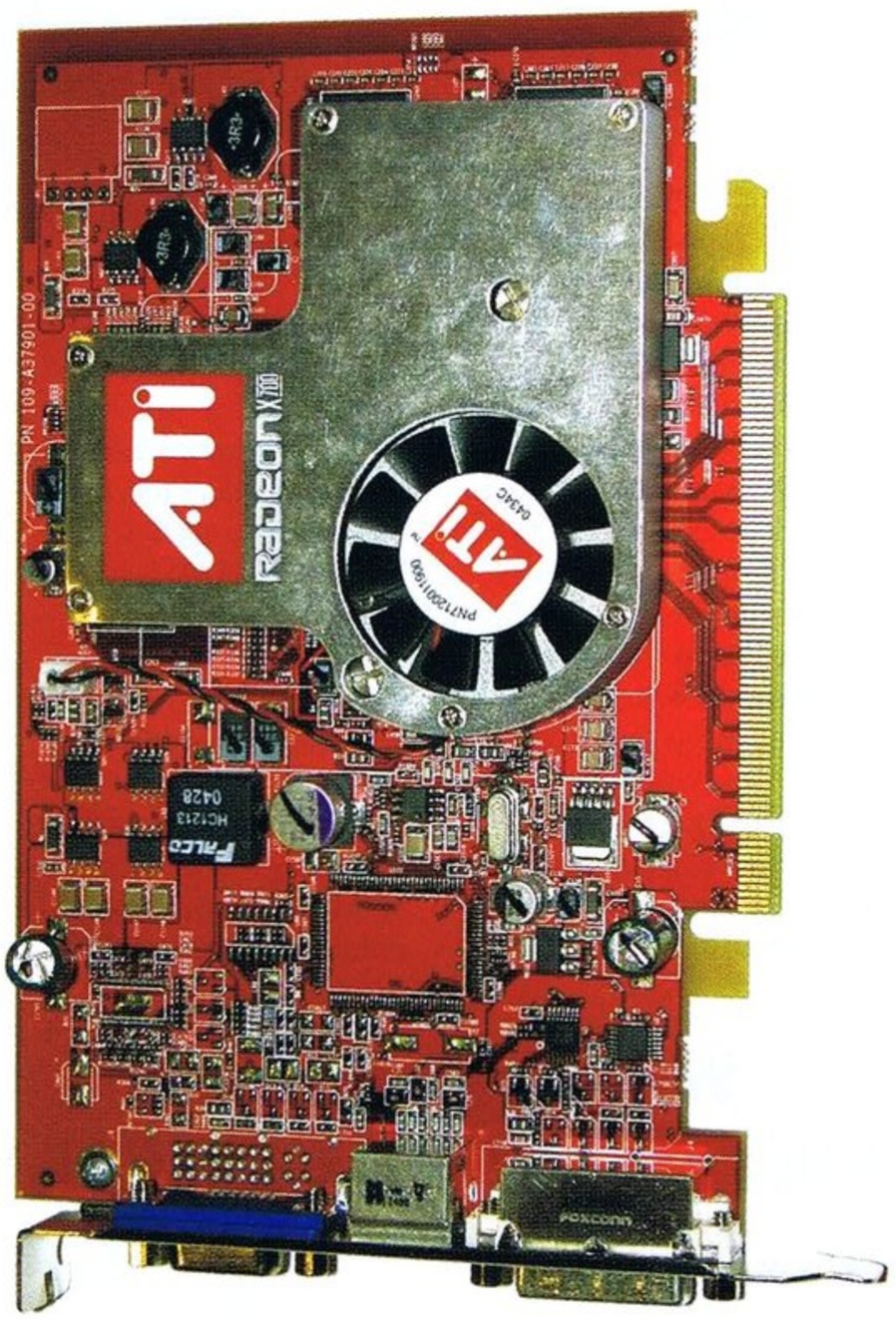
What's most impressive about this image is that the glow from the eyes is being produced by a real moving light source that entered the structure to light it up. The reality of real-time ray-tracing is approaching rapidly.

Further proof of the wonders of the pixel shader. Without it there would be no light-halo on the right hand side of the air ship, waves in the water, or a creature beneath it.

This image beautifully illustrates the advantages that 32-bit floating point colour brings. Note how the foreground is shrouded in shadows while the creature behind is being lit accurately by an external light source, at 37 frames per second.

Redefining the midrange ATI RADEON X700 PCI EXPRESS REFERENCE BOARD $TBA

ATi www.ati.com



With the release of PCI Express and the less than glamorous results of the X600 range, ATi have been busy re-creating a new midrange card to service newer, faster and more affordable PCs. The first real criticism that could be made about the X600 was that it was essentially a Radeon 9600 reintegrating onto a PCI Express interface. Thankfully, this is not the case with the X700 as it is a genuine redesign of the X800's RV420 architecture.

Dubbed RV410 the X700's GPU is manufactured with 110nm parts, 20nm smaller than previous microchip components. Yet despite refining the manufacturing process ATi hasn't bumped up the core speed like they normally do. Instead they have opted to increase memory speed because the X700 only has a 128-bit memory interface, half that of the X800. The reasoning for this is that due to this interface, the X700 is restricted at the memory bandwidth level, not the GPU. Also, necessary to keep costs down, the X700 uses only conventional DDR memory, not DDR2 like the high end range.

KEY FEATURES

›128/256MB configuration
›475MHz core, 525MHz memory
›8 pixel pipelines
›Shader Model 2b and 3Dc

A major factor in the rendering of modern games is the number of pixel pipelines that a GPU can use to process such effects as multiple texture layers and light dynamics. In the case of the RX700 it features eight pixel pipelines which is half that of the X800XT and four less than the X800 Pro. This reduction in pipelines hasn't however seriously affected the card because achieving a 3DMark05 of 3008 the RX700 is only approximately one third slower than an X800XT. That said the RX700 can still achieve 32.5 fps at 1280x1024 with 4x anti-aliasing in Doom 3 making it quite the performer for a mid-range card. By the time you read this there should be an available RX700 product from Abit and Sapphire.

PCGAMES ADDICT

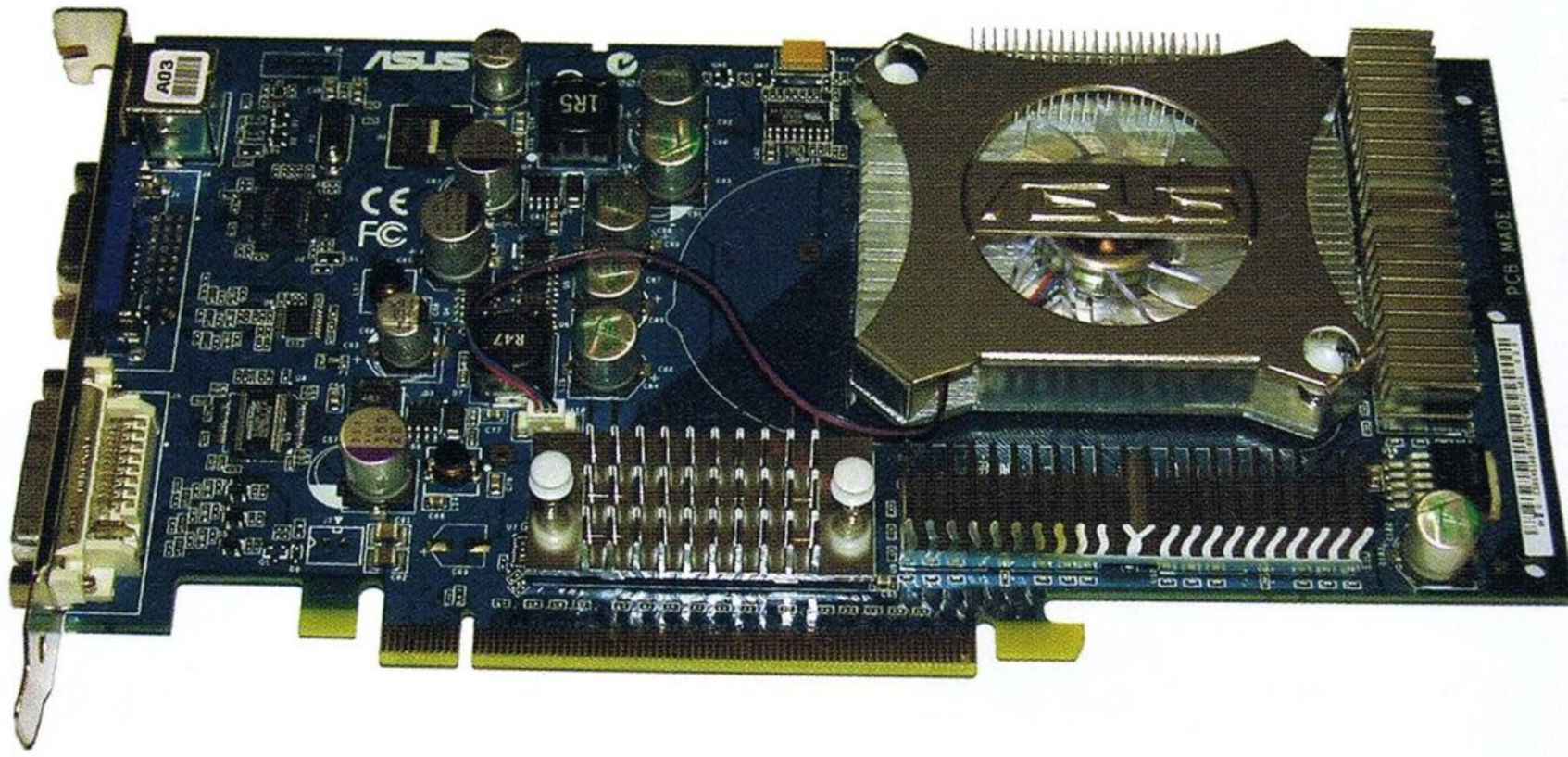
PERFORMANCE 75%
VALUE NA%

75%

›The RX700 is ATi's new mid-range PCI

Pipped at the post
ASUS EXTREME N5900 PCI EXPRESS $399

Asus au.asus.com (02) 9683 4388



The war between video card giants ATi and nVidia is certainly ugly but as they say, "all's fair". This time it's nVidia that's been "gotten" with the release of the 5900, which they define as a midrange solution. ATi on the other hand has released the RX700 as their midrange solution, which just so happens to be three times faster than the 5900. nVidia however are set to hit back with their 6600 range of cards and thus the 5900 should be considered a low end solution in the same league as an X600.

Utilising a 256-bit interface (double that of the RX700) along with a 400MHz core and 800MHz (DDR400) memory clock speeds it's not until we take a look at pixel pipelines that the 5900 starts to fall down. Where the RX700 features eight, the 5900 only has four renderers and it's this lack that has caused a very low 3DMark05 score of 969.

KEY FEATURES

- **128MB configuration**
- 400MHz core, 400MHz memory
- **4 pixel pipelines**
- ViVo (Video-in, Video-out) functionality

This doesn't equate to a useless card though as the latest version of 3D Mark is testing a video chipset's ability to render future titles. A quick timedemo does however confirm that on a 3Ghz+ system the 5900 can render current games like Doom 3 at 33 frames per second.

Where the 5900 does have an advantage though is in its ViVo (Video-in, Video-out) abilities as this card can capture video allowing you to watch TV while computing. Beyond the obvious advantages of being able to use a PC as a digital recorder, video capture is also a great way of participating in video conferencing.

Not skimping on the bundled software, Asus has included copies of Battle Engine Aquilla, Gunmetal and Deus Ex 2, all of which run particularly well on the card.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 69%
VALUE 73%
› More a low end fix than a midrange one
72%

Wireless server
ASUS WL-HDD WIRELESS HARD DRIVE $249

Cassa www.cassa.com.au (02) 8748 6755

As Wi-Fi continues to receive further acceptance, more interesting items are being made to utilise this technology. Able to communicate at both B (11Mbps) and G (54Mbps) speeds the Asus wireless hard disk allows for the sharing of files wirelessly across the network.

Configuring the device is a little tricky as it first involves connecting up to its wireless network and accessing the web configuration page. The first port of call at the configuration screen is to format the hard disk. This is because the WL-HDD doesn't actually ship with a drive built in and it's necessary to purchase one to complete installation. Once the hard drive is formatted, it's then just a matter of either setting up the drive as an FTP server or Windows SMB (shared) service. The downside though is that people need to be connected to the WL-HDD's wireless network in order to access the shared information which completely negates a wireless router. Okay, but can be done better.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 70%
VALUE 55%
› Wirelessly share data from a HD
65%

Silent Running
WESTERN DIGITAL WD2500SB (SPECIAL EDITION) $361

Cassa www.harristechnology.com.au 1300 139 999

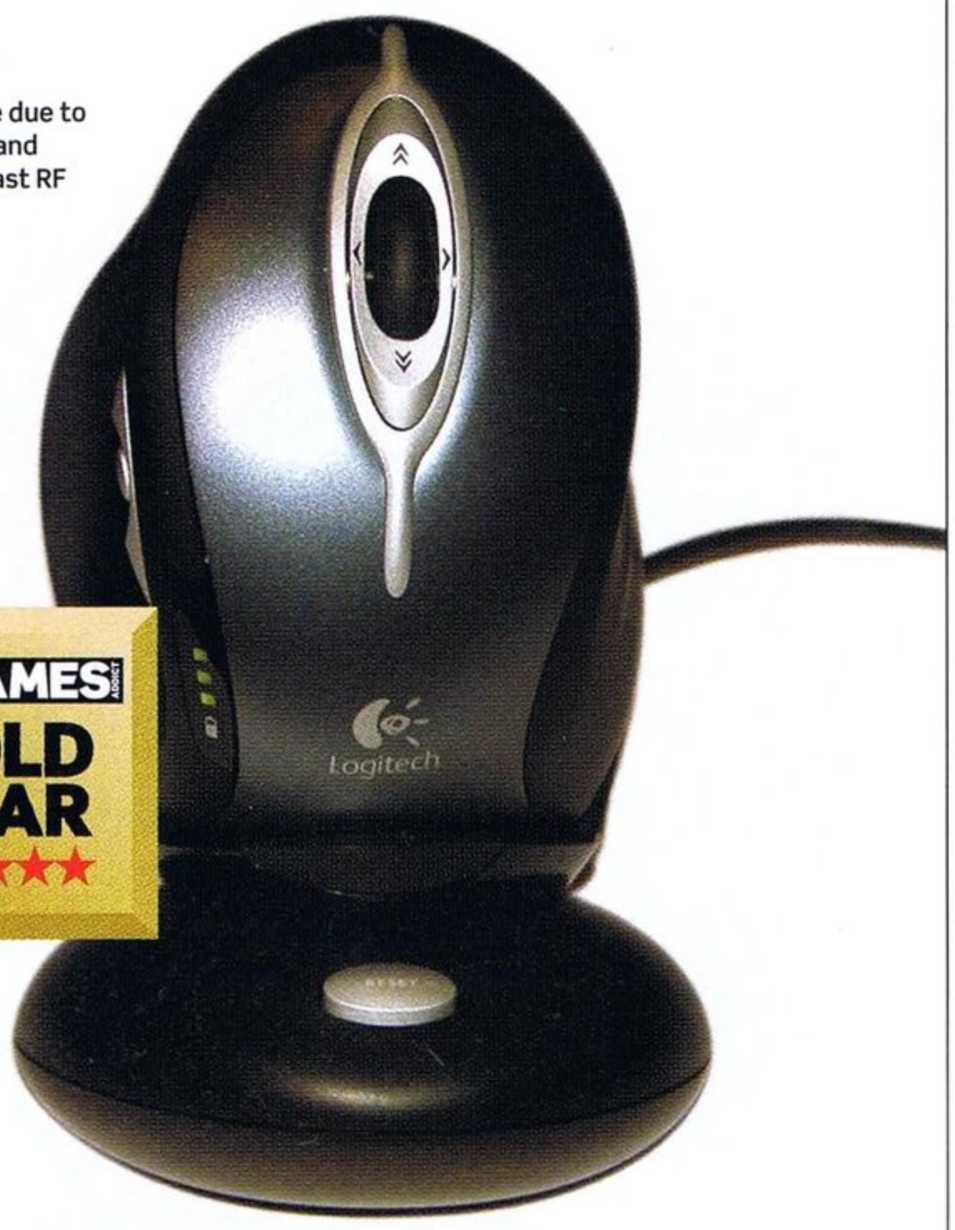
In regard to 3.5" hard disks th hasn't been any significant increase in capacity over the last 12 months and yet surprisin prices have continued to fall to the unprecedented cost of aroun $1.50 per gigabyte. Not only is large capacity more affordable than ever but the inclusion of RAID controllers on mid range motherboards has opened up a whole new market for disk manufacturers.

And this is exactly the audience the 2500SB wishes to address. Designed primarily for inexpensive RAID, the drive uses an ATA100 EIDE interface which ensures across the board compatibility. Performance is quite good but obviously nowhere near SATA RAID and a sustained rate of 88MB per second is quite respectable.

What makes this drive particularly special though is the change from a ball bearing motor to a fluid dynamic bearing (FDB) motor. Ten times more accurate, the FDB motor is also more shock resistant and virtually silent as there is no bearing noise at all.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 77%
VALUE 88%
› The RAID drive for those on a budget
82%

Exceptional performance due to laser optics and Logitech's Fast RF wireless technology.



PC GAMES ADDICT GOLD GEAR ★★★★★

Andale, andale, ariba, ariba
LOGITECH MX1000 LASER CORDLESS MOUSE $145

Harris Technology www.harristechnology.com.au
1300 139 999

While most people were content to see the engine and processing enhancements of the MX510 incorporated into a wireless product, Logitech has instead decided to create the world's first laser mouse. Declaring (well, the marketing department has) that optical is obsolete, Logitech have once again raised the bar on hardcore mousing peripherals.

Unfortunately, the latter marketing declaration is incorrect because a laser mouse still uses an optical process to negotiate movement. Laser illumination, however, can reveal surface structures that an LED can't because the coherent nature of laser light creates patterns of high contrast when it's reflected, even on glossy surfaces. So significant is this difference in laser light over LED illumination the MX1000 can 'see' 20 times more clearly than other optical mice.

This improvement in vision makes for an extremely responsive mouse that at first takes a little getting used to, purely because of how quick and accurate it is too. Another advantage of the laser engine is that acceleration detection is more accurate, allowing the mouse to easily differentiate between fast and slow movements.

Interestingly, the MX1000 uses the same wireless engine as the MX700 which has the advantage of being established, stable technology, that offers exceptional lag free performance. Furthermore a Lithium-Ion rapid rechargeable battery allows for 22 hours of solid use before it needs to be recharged and an LED display to shows the power status at all times, so you're not going to lose power without warning.

KEY FEATURES
- **LASER optical**
- Fast RF wireless
- **Lithium-Ion battery**
- 4-level battery indicator LED

But when it comes to ergonomics the MX1000 is a little lacking. It suffers from middle button bloat where the clickable scroll wheel continues to take on more and more tasks. In this case rocking the wheel left/right scrolls a window horizontally but when frantically gaming can impede your ability to middle click. The back/forward navigation buttons are less comfortably positioned than the MX700 and the touted deep-sculpted thumb support takes a little time to get used to. That aside, this is the mightiest of mice.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 92%
VALUE 80%
91%
›If you game for keeps you need this

Listen to MP3s, view pictures or watch videos wherever you go.

Reliable travelling companion
CREATIVE ZEN PORTABLE MEDIA CENTRE
$999

Creative australia.creative.com (02) 9666 6100

MP3 players have come a long way since the release of the first units and now we're seeing their evolution into the media centre. An important differentiation to make, MP3 players play only music, while a media centre allows for the viewing of images and videos as well.

In the case of the Zen Media Centre it features a 3.8" high colour LCD screen with enough brightness and backlighting so that even in sunlight it can be clearly viewed. Utilising a 20GB 2.5" hard disk the Zen can hold thousands of MP3 tracks, images or numerous videos. In fact it's hard to put a solid number on the amount of media the Zen can store because due to the nature of compressed data it will vary.

Measuring at 140mm (W) x 80mm (H) x 27mm (D) the Zen's size has been criticised because it's not as thin as (yet unreleased) competitor products. This however is quite deliberate on Creative's part because of a massively powerful Lithium-Ion battery. Taking 30 hours to initially charge the Zen can play 24 hours of music or eight hours of video before requiring a recharge – twice the playtime of its closest competitor. This really positions it as a capable overseas travelling companion rather than just for commuting.

KEY FEATURES
- **20GB 2.5" HDD**
- 320x240 3.8" LCD screen
- **Rechargeable Lithium-Ion battery**
- Windows Mobile OS

Copying data onto the device is achieved using Windows Media Player 10 (WMP) (included with the Zen) and although only in Beta at the moment is quite stable. Overclockers however should beware! The WMV format is used to view video which due to its extremely tight compression at point of conversion thrashes the processor. Thus even the most stably overclocked system may need to be turned down to avoid constant crashing.

All up the Zen is an extremely impressive unit. USB 2.0 allows for the fast transfer of data and video plays back clearly and smoothly at 320x240. MP3s and overall sound quality is excellent and a large battery means that you can be entertained that much longer.

PC GAMES ADDICT
PERFORMANCE 88%
VALUE 74%
87%
›Introducing tech-heads to some Zen

Heat sink or weapon?
ASUS STAR ICE $79

Asus au.asus.com (02) 9683 4388

We've seen a lot of massive heat sinks over the years in the PCGA tech section but it's only now that a heat sink which could be described as gargantuan has been encountered. Looking like one of the barrels from Donkey Kong heaved at Mario, the utilisation of this design is to achieve greater cooling. Standing at 160mm tall the intention of the barrel is to face a rear intake fan and suck in the cooler air outside to blow directly over the CPU.

For the most part this works quite well but it depends heavily on the design of the case and the location of the CPU on the motherboard as to how well it all lines up. It's also worth making sure that the rear fans are intake and not exhaust, otherwise the Star Ice's design goes to waste. But even if it all lines up there can still be problems due to the sink's girth. For example after the heat sink was installed it was quickly discovered that you can't remove memory or any of the hard disk bays without first removing the heat sink.

Construction wise the Star Ice is well made with a fully machined surface for maximum contact with the CPU and will work with socket 478 (P4), K7 and K8 CPUs. Made entirely of copper to ensure maximum heat conduction there are three heat pipes that rest against the machined plate in an effort to achieve greater cooling. Two pipes funnel heat away into the soldered stack fins and fan barrel while the third heat pipe pushes cooler air over the CPU. This produces amazing performance and anything up to 20 degrees can be taken off in the right environment. The obvious problem though is that its sheer size affects the ability to easily upgrade the PC and is therefore best in a system that doesn't require a lot of attention.

PCGAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
MODERATE

›Difficult to work with due to its size.

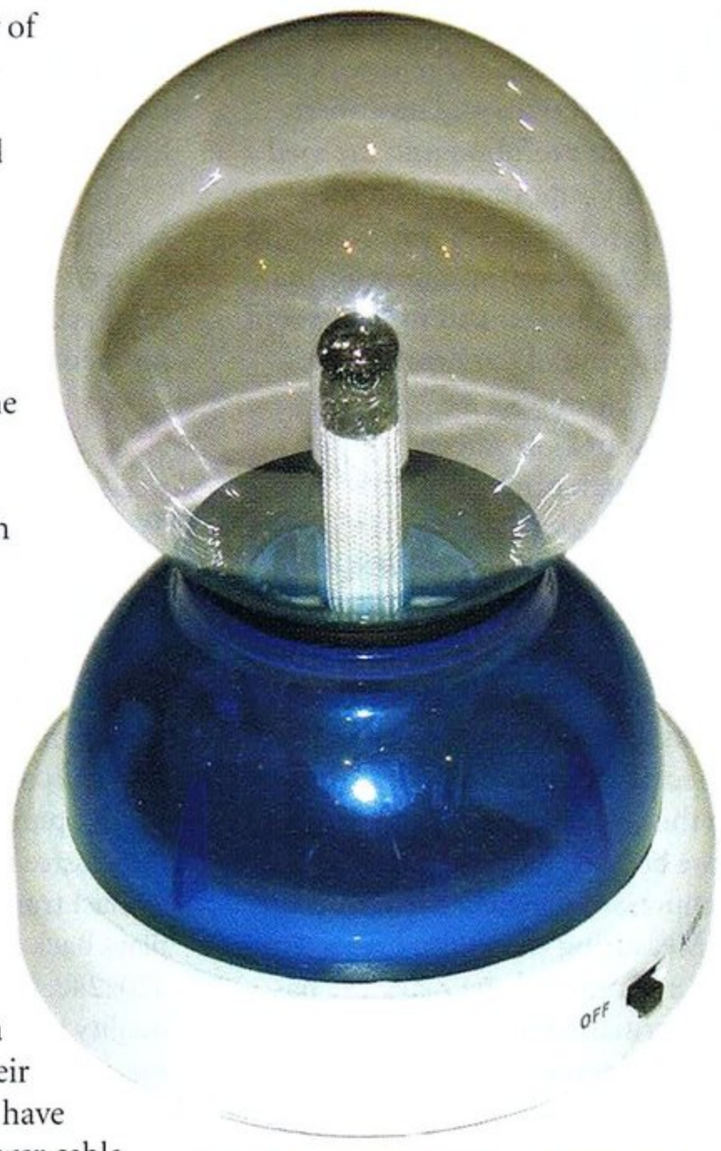
68%

Electric personality
PC PLASMA BALL $26

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Displaying the beauty of electricity, a plasma ball is an effective way of generating the kind of attention deserving a modded system. Plasma balls work by discharging electricity through low-pressure gasses and by cycling the voltage from the central electrode a pretty display of "lightning" like electricity is created. Touch the side and you can even cause the discharge to follow your finger, but you probably already knew that.

Installation is simple as a 5.25" Molex connector is used for power but is annoyingly short at only 60cm long. Barely an adequate length for a PC placed on top of a desk anyone who keeps their machine below is going to have to either make a longer power cable or use a splitter out the back as an extension. As a novel extra there's even a cigarette lighter adaptor included so the device can be used in a car.



PCGAMES ADDICT

INSTALLATION
SIMPLE

›An affordable way to get a plasma ball

60%

Let there be light
USB DESK LAMP $95

PC Casegear www.pccasegear.com.au (03) 9584 7266

Given that a USB connection delivers power as well as data it was only a matter of time until the arrival of the USB desk lamp. Ideal for late night gaming, the lamp emits soft illumination that lights up a keyboard well but doesn't interfere with the brightness of the monitor. Curious in design, the base of the lamp is a generic mouse mould in coloured transparent plastic that's probably more to do with cost effective purchasing than aesthetics. Still, it does allow the lamp to fit in on a gamer's desk.

Installation is effortless as you just have to plug it into either a USB port on the PC or a powered HUB. One gripe though is that what appears to be a power button (the mouse's middle button) only turns a blue LED on or off. To turn the lamp on you need to plug it in and to turn it off requires unplugging.

PCGAMES ADDICT

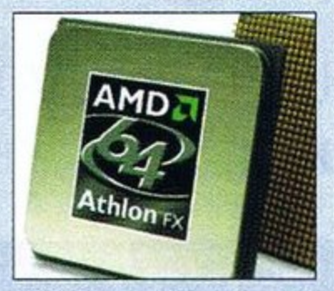
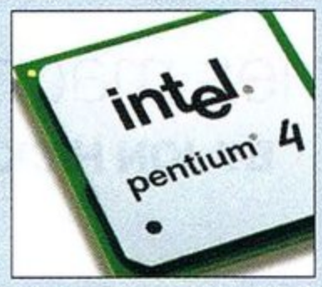
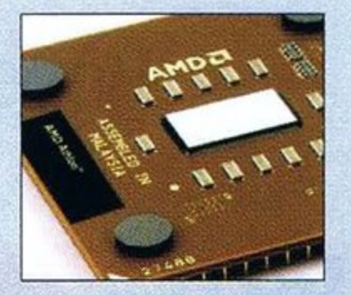
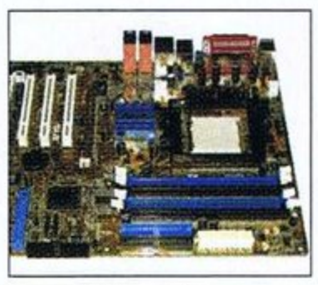
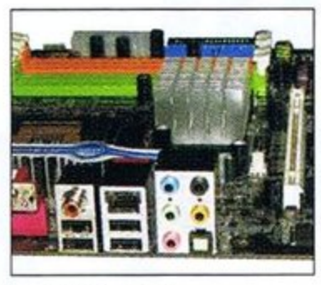
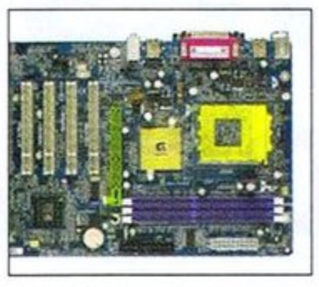
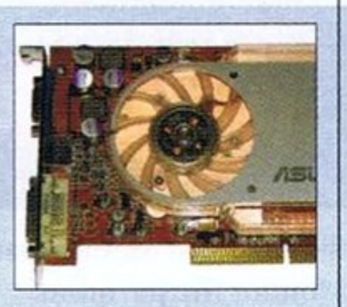
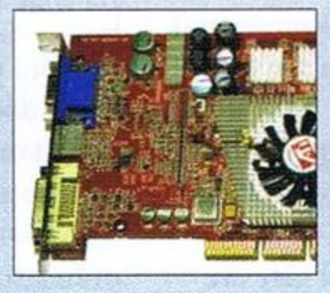
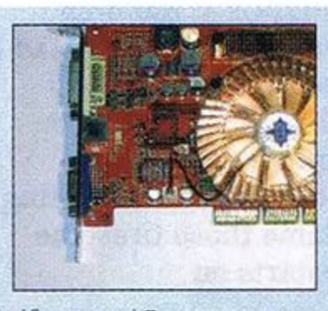
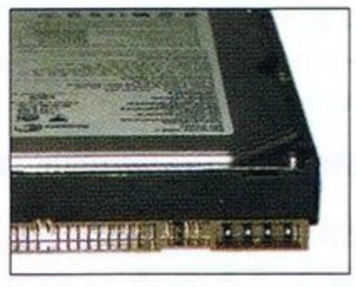
INSTALLATION
ULTRA SIMPLE

›Let the PC shed some light

75%

BIG GEAR HUNT

Your definitive guide to the best hardware money can buy

	BEST IN CLASS	MID RANGE	BUDGET CHOICE
PROCESSOR	**ATHLON FX-53** $1,429 AMD www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "Able to compute an astonishing 64 bits in one pass the FX-53 is ready for the next generation of operating systems and games"	**PENTIUM 4EE** $1,479 Intel www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "The extreme edition of Intel's Pentium 4 processor is fast, and in the right hands highly overclockable."	**ATHLON XP 3000** $270 www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "The XP CPUs are quite swift but affordable with their reliance on a 400MHz FSB. The 3000 runs on a 333MHZ FSB."
MOTHER BOARDS	**A8V DELUXE** $223 Asus www.asus.com.au (02) 9683 3488  Dual Channel DDR, 1000Mbps LAN and 802.11g Wi-Fi, Full RAID, 8x AGP and a 2GHZ FSB. The perfect home for an FX-53	**MSI 915P NEO 2 PLATINUM** $249 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070  Happily midrange, this affordable MSI motherboard offers all the advantages of PCI-Express such as fast video and RAID. **PCGA 25 89%**	**GA-7S748** $70 Gigabyte www.compuparts.com.au (02) 9482 2582  "Don't expect any on board additions but with a 400MHz front side bus, this board can power an XP3200+ for such a tiny price."
GRAPHICS CARDS	**RADEON AX800XT** $899 Asus www.synnex.com.au 1300 880 038  "An uber-fast card that's hassle free and able to handle the next generation of games without a hiccough." **PCGA 25 94%**	**RADEON 9800 PRO** $399 Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288  "Able to render DX 8.1 games at 1600x1200 and DX 9 games at 1024x768 this is the perfect mid range card." **PCGA 14 94%**	**GEFORCE FX5700** $275 MSI www.msicomputer.com.au (02) 9748 0070  "With the advent of Half Life 2 and Doom 3 you don't want a card any more budget than this" **PCGA 18 91%**
HARD DRIVES	**RAPTOR WD740** $449 Achieva www.achieva.com.au (02) 9742 3288 "Although only 74GB in size, these 10,000 RPM wonders give top performance, especially in a SATA RAID setup. Pure speed." **PCGA 20 97%**	**MAXTOR MAXLINE III** $420 Maxtor www.maxtor.com (02) 9368 3662 "The new king of SATA quarter terabyte drives. Only 7200 RPM this baby can burst at 79.8MB/sec." **PCGA 25 95%**	**SEAGATE ST3200822A** $209 I-Tech www.i-tech.com.au 1 800 833 883  "200GB is nothing to be sneezed at and the PATA (old IDE) interface means it will work on anyone's system." **PCGA 23 84%**
MOUSE PADS	**MX700 WIRE-LESS OPTICAL MOUSE** $149 Logitech www.logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 "This high performance mouse never misses a beat. Fast movement with never a cord to get in the way.."	**MX510 OPTICAL MOUSE** $85 Logitech www.logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 A 5.8 megapixel/sec optical sensor that can handle 15g of acceleration ensures precise translation of movement. **PCGA 24 89%**	**BASIC OPTICAL MOUSE** $20 Compuparts www.compuarts.com.au (02) 9482 2582 Not as fast or responsive as its rivals, MS's vanilla flavoured mouse gets the job done.
WANT THAT	**MOMO RACING WHEEL** Momo racing wheel $249 Logitech www.Logitech.com.au (02) 9648 1818 "With excellent force feedback effects and a fast responsive wheel driving games take on a whole new dimension.." **PCGA 17 93%**		

INSERT COIN(S)

Prices vary wildly in the real world. To get the best price on computer kit by contacting three different retailers and comparing costs.

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  www.compuparts.com.au
- **Emagen Computuers**
  1300 880 070
  www.emagen.com.au
- **EYO**
  02 9790 8822
  www.eyo.com.au
- **Gamedude**
  07 3387 1500
  www.gamedude.com.au
- **Grays Online Australia**
  Phone N/A
  www.graysonline.com.au
- **Harris Technology**
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  www.ht.com.au
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POWER UP YOUR PC

Boost your games machine with our handy word pills

BY JON HICKS & JERE LAWRENCE

DO IT... NOW!

Test your power supply

MAINTENANCE

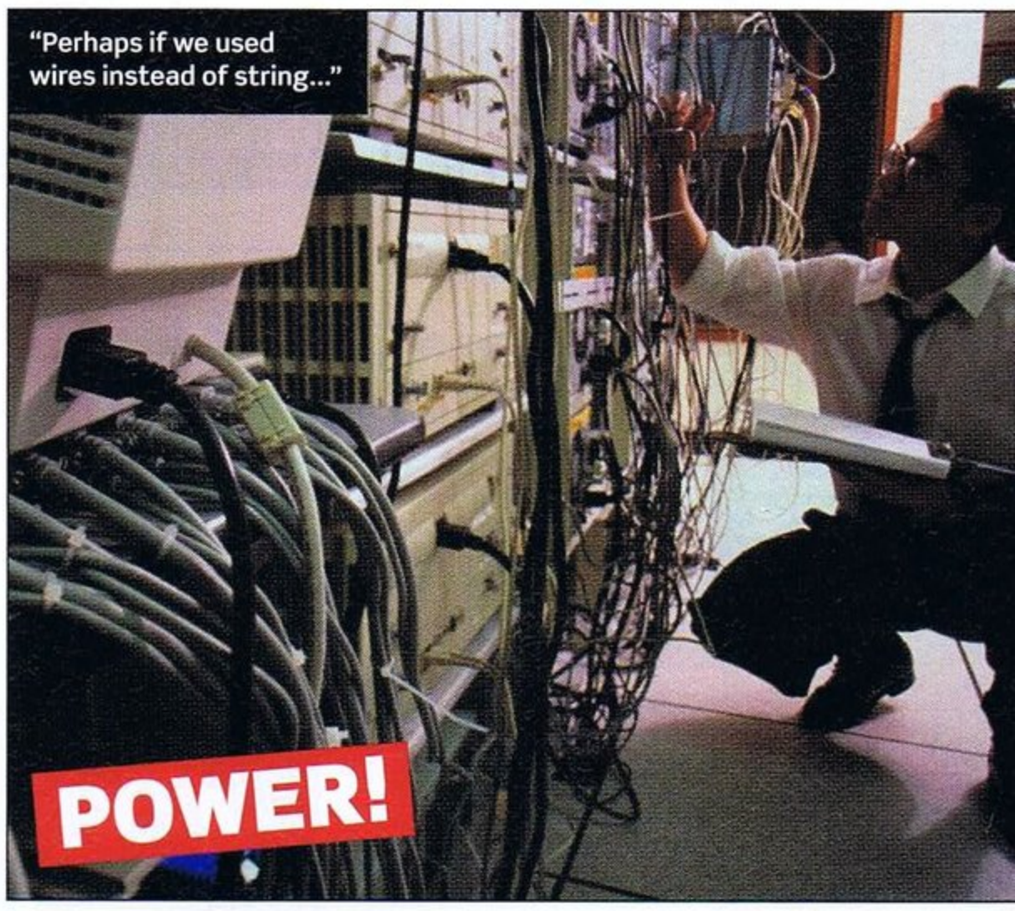
PROBLEM Random crashes may be caused by your power supply
REMEDY Check the voltage on each rail
RESULT One less thing to blame those tiresome restarts on

These days, when most of the components in your PC have the sort of thirst for power that wouldn't disgrace Stalin, the humble power supply has become a lot more important than in days of old. A weak power supply that can't meet the demands of modern hardware can be the cause of any crashes, blue-screens, and things that go bump in the boot sequence.

The secret to a quiet life is a constant voltage on each wire, or 'rail' as we technical people like to say. There are usually three flavours, rated 12V, 5V and 3.3V, and while you'll be lucky to get those exact figures you do need to be within 5% of them. (That's 11.40 and 12.60, 4.5 and 5.5, and 3.14 and 3.47, for anyone without pocket calculators and a deep-rooted sense of pedantry.)

ON THE DISC Upgrade your games machine with our hand-picked selection of apps and utilities > Toolkit

A surprisingly effective and extremely low-tech way of measure your power supply unit is weight. A full-size ATX unit with less heft than a packet of crisps is usually lacking in grunt. For producing actual numbers, software is safest; try the inestimable and sadly-discontinued Motherboard Monitor (**http://mbm.livewiredev.com**) while simultaneously pushing your system to maximum load with Prime95 (**www.mersenne.org/freesoft.htm**). If voltages remain within the 5% mark, you're in the clear. Unfortunately, this relies on your motherboard sensors being totally accurate, which they rarely are: the only bomb-proof test is to break out a multimeter and take a reading direct – something you're better off leaving to the professionals.



UTILITY OF THE MONTH

WEB MESSENGER

Yes, it's Microsoft again and no, this little software gadget is not uniformly useful, but it *is* a very handy extra for subversive chatting on networks that are otherwise locked down. The one they use where you work, for example. The MSN homies have simply developed a web interface for their online chat service MSN Messenger, so that you can use it from a web page – it looks and functions in much the same way as the program, but you can run it from just about any browser that takes your fancy. Try the beta at **http://webmessenger.msn.com**.

DO IT... THIS MONTH!

Set up a wireless network

NO STRINGS

PROBLEM No network router to connect your PCs
REMEDY A wireless ad-hoc network
RESULT Net access from your wireless PC

Don't let a USB modem stop you connecting your other PCs to the Net, if they are wireless capable. Windows XP lets you put a wireless card in the main PC and lets the other machine connect through it. Go to: Start > Control Panel > Network Connections and right click your wireless connection. Choose Properties > Wireless Networks, make sure there's nothing in the Preferred Networks list, click the Advanced button at the bottom of the window and check 'Computer to computer (ad hoc) networks only.' Back in the Wireless Network tab, click Add, type in a network name, and hit OK – you can skip security until it's all working. This will create a new network icon under Preferred Networks. Then, all you've got to do is head over to the other PC, open up the same Network Connections view and select the new network where it appears under 'Available Networks'. Click Configure, choose OK. Done.

To share files, open up a folder and choose Tools > Folder Options > View and check Simple File Sharing. You can then right click individual folders and check 'Share This Folder.' For net sharing, return to Network Connections on the PC with the broadband connection, right-click the connection icon, choose Properties > Advanced and check 'Allow other network users...'

Essential Tech Tips

TECH SUBJECT
A question of ATi

It's by no means at all an accident that the two big name games of 2004 are heavily backed by the world's two most competitive video card companies. While nVidia worked hard with id to make sure that their cards did play *Doom 3* "The way It's Meant to be Played (TM)", ATi have been working with Valve to make sure that *Half-Life 2* will be the spectacle it's meant to be on the Radeon cards..

1 OpenGL vs. DX9 ATi has been developing its RADEON family of cards to be optimised for DirectX 9 while nVIDIA has put a little more effort into OpenGL. John Carmack, CEO and Lead Programmer of id, is a strong proponent of OpenGL and as *Doom 3* is written in that API offers an advantage to nVidia cards.?

2 Colour depth One area where ATi cards have a massive advantage over the nVidia range regarding the rendering of *Half-Life 2* has to do with floating point colour and bit precision. Long ago Valve decided that 24-bit floating point (FP) colour was best for DirectX 9 as it provided much more precision than 16-bit but was not as demanding as 32-bit. The bad news for nVidia is that their FX range of cards only supports 16-bit and 32-bit FP colour operations while the ATi Radeon series supports 24-bit.

3 Low end lamentation An absolute nightmare for the nVidia camp, the lack of 24-bit support for the FX range of cards is going to mean massive sacrifices at the lower end. Like a CPU, a GPU has very deep pipelines and if shader code isn't optimised to keep a pipeline busy throughout each clock cycle, performance will suffer. Previously *Half-Life 2* shader code was not optimised for the nVidia range of cards and because of such appalling performance on even top range nVidia cards, Valve had to modify their code to scale down to 16-bit FP colour.

4 The victim? Unfortunately for nVidia owners, the reduction to 16-bit colour will only work for the FX5900 upwards and the lesser FX range (i.e. 5200 / 5600) will only be able to render *Half-Life 2* at the less visually luxurious DX8 mode. In contrast ATi's mid-low end 9600 range will be able to render *Half-Life 2* at the DX9 level.

5 The solution nVidia's solution to this problem is indeed interesting. They have added a run time compiler to their driver set which translates DX9 high level shader language commands into a friendlier nVIDIA format in real time without, they claim, sacrificing image quality. The latter "optimisations" as nVIDIA often amusingly refer to them as still aren't going to help the aforementioned FX cards though and is primarily a way of ensuring that nVIDIA's latest flagship product isn't made to look a fool when *Half-Life 2* is released.

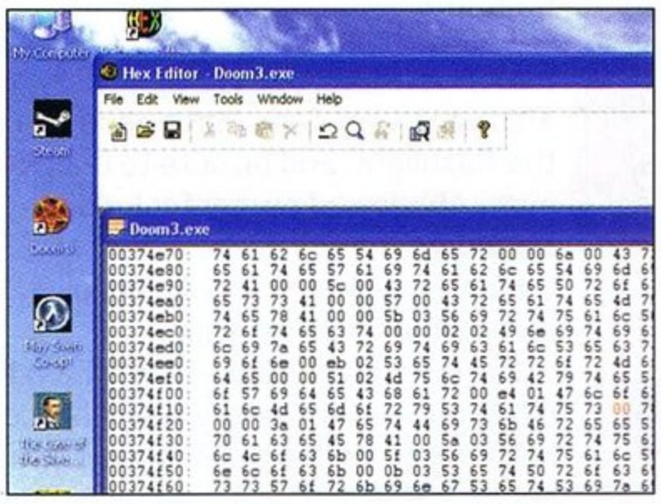
DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

CUSTOMISING

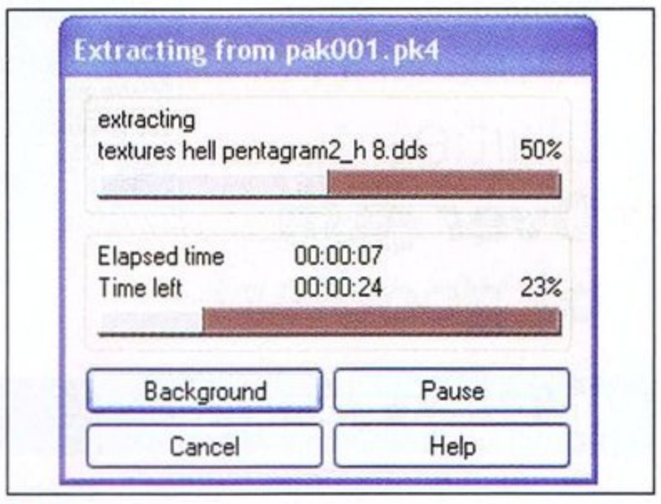
Tweak Doom 3

PROBLEM In a totally unexpected development, *Doom 3* places great demands on your PC
REMEDY Tweak the configuration files
RESULT More efficient fragging

It's heeeere – the first game to truly show the importance of a decent electronic infrastructure in times of satanic invasion. More importantly, despite years of people publishing their system specs in forums and fretting over graphics cards, it'll run quite happily on a potato with two bits of metal stuck in it. As ever, of course, there are some adjustments that can be made to improve it, and Mr Carmack's considerable skill with a games engine means that there's plenty of back-door tweakery to improve your performance significantly. The most spectacular is for ATi cards, particularly higher-end stuff: an ATi staffer uncovered a straightforward hack for one of the shader routines that can give a major performance boost. You can find it in simple downloadable form at www.beyond3d.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14967, along with a series of extensive big-brain discussions and John Carmack's own thoughts on the matter. For a few more tweaks read on – but do back everything up first.



1 Run Doom 3 in Windows 98 by opening the Doom3.exe with a hex editor (try www.hhdsoftware.com/hexeditor.html). Locate offsets 00374F1E: 45 and 00374F1F: 78. Change both to 00.



2 Reduce loading times by using WinRAR (www.rarlab.com) to uncompress pak000.pk4, pak001.pk4, pak002.pk4, pak003.pk4, pak004.pk4 in the doom3/base directory. Delete the originals.

3 Anisotropic filtering is set to 8x by default. Change it using the line 'seta image_anisotropy "8"' in doomconfig.ini. For best results, set to "0" and change seta image_lodbias "0" to "1".

DoomConfig.cfg - Notepad

```
File  Edit  Format  View  Help
seta r_gamma "1"
seta r_swapInterval "0"
seta r_useIndexBuffers "0"
seta r_customHeight "486"
seta r_customWidth "720"
seta r_fullscreen "1"
seta r_mode "3"
seta r_multiSamples "0"
seta image_downSizeLimit "256"
seta image_ignoreHighQuality "0"
seta image_downSizeBumpLimit "256"
seta image_downSizeSpecularLimit "64
seta image_downSizeBump "0"
seta image_downSizeSpecular "0"
```

4 Adjust bump-mapping for lesser 3D cards by setting image_downSizeBump '1' and then changing image_downSizeBumpLimit to '256' if you've got a 64Mb card or '512' for a 128Mb card.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

"WHAT ARE PIXEL SHADERS?"

Doom 3 has mercifully knocked this off the hardware-paranoia rankings but it snared a lot of people with *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. Put painfully simply, pixel shaders are programs capable of performing operations on individual pixels, enabling special effects of extremely advanced levels of detail if the CPU on your graphics card can cope with the extra work. If you've seen the light appear to glint off a helicopter's windshield when it turns into the sun in *Joint Operations*, that was probably a pixel shader.

"I only lurk in pixel-shadows."

Unfortunately, while pixel shaders are software rather than a hardware component, older chipsets - those found on GeForce 4 MX's, GeForce 2's, and Radeon 7000's, for example - just can't support them, so shader-heavy games like *Deadly Shadows* won't run. Only one cure: buy a new graphics card.

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- **11** playable demos
- **13** massive mods
- **15** must-see movies
- **33** system-boosting tools and utilities
- **Over 5Gb of goodies!**

THE PCGA PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- **PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.**
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email **dan@derwenthoward.com.au**

DVD vs CD

1 DVD **6.12 CDS!**

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue, DVD-drive owners get an extra:

+ 8 playable demos
+ 46 movies
+ 8 mods
+ 6 software tools
= 4.5GB of gaming guff!

NO DVD DRIVE?

- New games these days are becoming huge, and DVDs are the only only practical way to store some of these games. You'll NEED one.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only $70 in our Big Gear Hunt buyer's guide.**

CD & DVD

DOOM 3

WHAT IS IT?

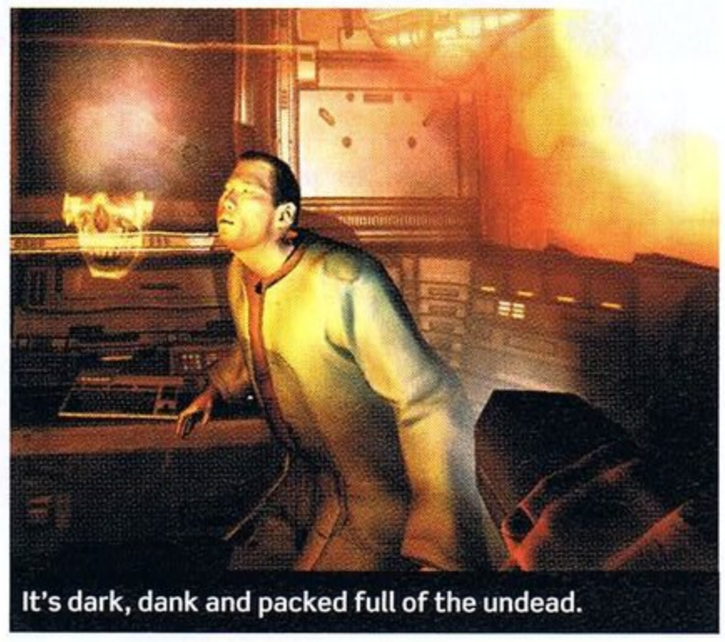
A taste of *Doom 3*'s demon-haunted carnage. Zombies and monsters will push your nerves (and machine) to the limit as you try to escape a Martian research facility rapidly being colonised by undead fiends.

DEMO GOALS

The introduction to Mars City sees you given the straightforward assignment of tracking down a rogue employee who's decided to explore the remoter parts of the base on his own. Go and pick him up. What could possibly go wrong?

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- It's very, very dark. Make good use of the flashlight, and be sure to check every shadowed corner for lurking creatures.
- Watch your back. There's usually something following you.
- Watch for staff PDAs – in addition to filling out the backstory they also contain helpful passcodes that'll enable you to unlock secret areas and keep you topped up with health and ammunition.
- *Doom* is a bit of a monster when it comes to required specs, so if the framerate is suffering consider turning the resolution down. This will keep the graphics looking gorgeous but get rid of the brain-punishing slideshow effect.
- Be wary of tempting goodies placed in obvious positions. This is *Doom*, after all. Is that a totally free, totally unguarded rocket launcher? I don't think so.


It's dark, dank and packed full of the undead.

DEMO CHALLENGE
No firearms! Try some bare-knuckle boxing with the undead.

README

Developer id Software
Publisher Activision **Requires** Windows XP, 1.5GHz CPU, 384Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** movement ■ **Mouse** freelook ■ **Left Mouse** fire ■ **Right Mouse** jump ■ **Q/E** lean ■ **R** reload ■ **F** flashlight ■ **TAB** PDA ■ **C** crouch ■ **Shift** sprint

CD & DVD

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN

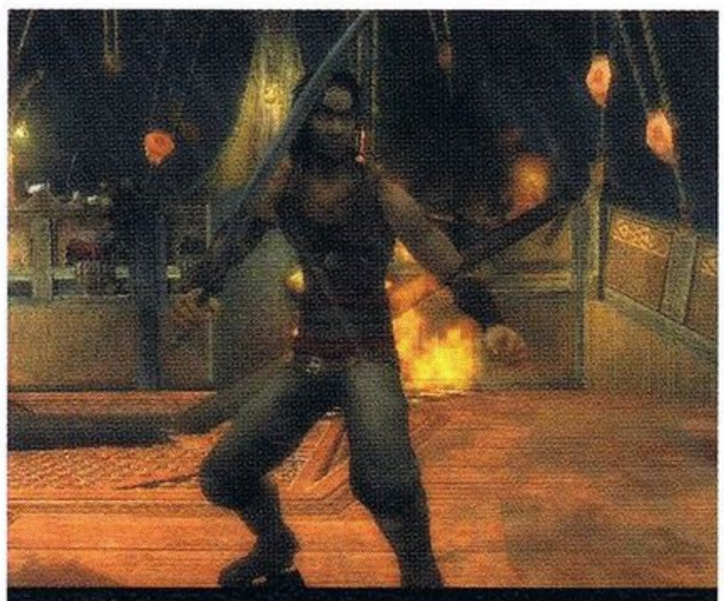
DEMO CHALLENGE
Get through the galleon without so much as a scratch.

WHAT IS IT?

If you enjoy hacking things to pieces with a pair of rusty swords then you'll appreciate this. We're seeing a darker, more mature prince, so expect blood and cursing (gasp!) plus slick combat and puzzle solving.

DEMO GOALS

This demo showcases the new and improved combat engine. The prince's retinue of moves is greatly increased, and he'll be using them to escape from a sinking galleon and traipse through a dank, trap-filled dungeon.


Practise those moves and unleash that warrior.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- The new combat moves are really rather useful and a much quicker way of despatching miscreants than simply whacking them repeatedly with a sword.
- Block. Health is a precious commodity and if you let every penknife-wielding Tom, Dick and Harry get a swipe at you, you'll be sorry.
- When backed into a corner, use the space bar and a direction key to perform a roll and escape. If you press the space bar and move directly away from the enemy he'll backflip out of there, giving you some breathing space.
- The prince can also kick off walls, allowing him to propel himself above foes' heads and slash them on his way back down.

README

Developer Ubisoft
Publisher In-house **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** movement ■ **Mouse** move camera ■ **Left Mouse** sword attack ■ **E** second weapon attack ■ **Right Mouse** wall run ■ **Spacebar** roll/jump ■ **C** pick up/throw weapon ■ **Shift** walk ■ **R** rewind time

CD

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

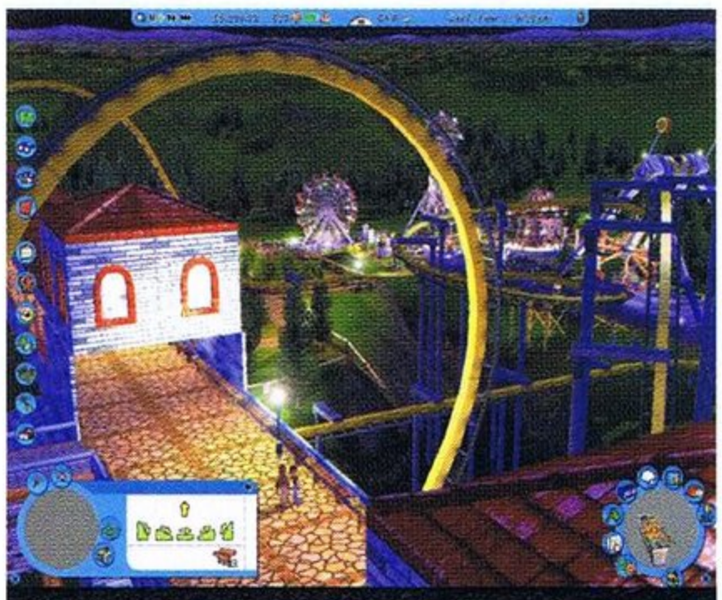
WHAT IS IT?

Step once more into the shiny shoes of a theme park owner, manager and designer. Lure the unsuspecting public to your park with the promise of spectacular rides and firework displays and then fleece their cash off 'em with overpriced soft drinks, stuffed animals and helium-filled balloons.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Spend more than $20K on a single behemoth rollercoaster.

DEMO GOALS

With only 45 minutes, a little money and a small selection of rides to construct (a tiny fraction of *Rollercoaster Tycoon*'s total, mind you), build a park worth $105,000 and swelling with 550 punters to earn the coveted 'Tycoon' title.



Alton Towers – eat your heart out.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› When designing rollercoasters, don't put sharp bends immediately after steep drops. For very obvious reasons. Then again, it could be fun...

› Different rides will attract different punters, so don't limit yourself to adrenaline-seekers – granny and gramps will quickly get bored. A good balance of thrilling and mild rides will ensure your park really is fun for all the family.

› The game's scope is constrained only by the limits of imagination. Rides that follow a track, like the coasters or water rides, can loop around one another and go over, under and through the park's scenery.

› Go for broke on spectacle and your customers will love it.

README

Developer Frontier Developments
Publisher Atari **Requires** 733MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **Left Mouse** select ■ **Double Left Mouse** select and zoom ■ **Mouse Wheel** zoom ■ **Middle Mouse** rotate camera ■ **W,A,S,D** pan camera

CD

SCRAPLAND

WHAT IS IT?

An introduction to a bizarre metal world which combines adventure with *Grand Theft Auto* hijinks in space. And throws in some robots for good measure.

DEMO GOALS

Take out the two cops and win a race in crazy bets set by the Crazy Gambler. And that's not all – you also have to start an unusually hectic career as a journalist.

Think *GTA* but with spaceships and robots...

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Pressing Q will help you lock on to your target (provided it's close enough to your crosshairs) which means it's a lot easier to hit.

› The machinegun (press 3) is the better gun for taking out targets at fairly close range, but keep an eye on the ammo.

› When racing, stick to the road because your ship travels much faster. Use the right mouse for a turbo boost too. The best ship for the race is in Spoot-Nick's slot 1. When you're next to your parked ship, select Spoot-Nick instead and then you can automatically change your flyer.

› Remember, you've got total freedom of movement in all three directions – sometimes the building you're looking for might not be to your left or your right but actually just above you.

› Although you're usually rewarded for blowing things up, don't try to kill your opponent while racing, or you'll just have to start the race all over again.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Win the race with the appallingly slug-like Emergency Gunship.

README

Developer Mercury Steam
Publisher Enlight Software **Requires** 800MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS **F1** mission info ■ **E** lock enemy ship ■ **Q** lock enemy ship in crosshair ■ **Left Mouse** action/fire ■ **Right Mouse** overwrite/boost ■ **1-7** select weapons

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+13 mods

Hot new *Doom 3* mods, award-winning *UT2004* mods, plus *Medieval*, *Battlefield Vietnam* and even *City of Heroes*.

DOOM 3: The flashlight deathmatch mod.

+15 movies

Game trailer a-go-og! With celebratory 'almost here' footage of *Half-Life 2*, *Battlefield 2*, *Pirates!*, *D&D Online* and more.

HALF-LIFE 2: Incredible new video footage.

+Retro classic

As *Half-Life 2* takes you to the next level of PC gaming, **PCGA** take you back to where it all started - *Half-Life Uplink*.

HALF-LIFE UPLINK: Classic retro-demo

+Patches

› **The largest and latest fixes for you: *Doom 3*, *Dawn of War*, *UT 2004*, *Tribes: Vengeance*, *CMR '05*, *NWN***

+Extra features

› **CLASSIC MAP – E1M1 for *Doom 3*. Why revisit this old killing field? Because it never looked this good...**
› **GALLERIES – Bonus screenshots**
› **D-I-Y GOODIES - The latest version of *The Sims 2 Body Shop*, *The Body Shop Starter Pack* (textures & templates) and bits for the tutorial**
› **SHAREWARE DEMOS – *Scorched 3D***

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

Disc page contents refer to DVD edition. CD contents restricted by size.

THE TOOLKIT

Essential tools and apps

Game apps

Match-making ..... X-Fire
Server browser ..... All-Seeing Eye
Voice communicator ..... Skype
Chat software ..... Trillian
Screen grabber ..... IrfanView
Emulation ..... Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewer ..... Seismovision
Video capture ..... FRAPS

Performance

Download manager ..... BitTornado
Uninstaller ..... EasyUninstall 6
Video card driver ..... Radeon, nVidia
System monitor .. Motherboard Monitor

Security

Anti-spam ..... Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware ..... AdAware
Anti-popup ..... Coolweb Shredder
Firewall ..... Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor ..... WinRar
Picture viewer ..... IrfanView
PDF viewer ..... Acrobat Reader
Web browser ..... Mozilla Firefox
FTP client ..... Filezilla
Email client ..... Mozilla Thunderbird
Music player ..... WinAmp
Movie player ..... Media Player Classic
Movie codec ..... DivX
Picture manipulation ... Paint Shop Pro 8

NOTE: *PSP8* is the trial version only.

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Is your coverdisc playing up? Help is at hand

1 If the menu program does not automatically start, the autorun feature may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar and type D:\IERUNNER.EXE or D:\MENU\INDEX.HTM (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE:
Disc Department, PC Games Addict, Reply Paid 1035, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355

4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the **Disc Support forum**. Check here to see if there's a quick fix:
http://forums.derwenthoward.com.au/viewforum.php?f=5

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DVD

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

WHAT IS IT?

A chance to learn how to turn eight men into an invicible fighting force, mastering the basics of modern urban battle tactics. Originally intended for use as a training aid for US soldiers.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Complete the Zakistan mission without a single casulty

DEMO GOALS

An excellent package this one, the demo not only includes a complete playable level, but also the entire tutorial section of the game, that slowly but surely tells you everything you'll need to know.

This is a good example of how not to stand around...

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Play through the tutorials. Yes, we know that's pretty lame as a performance tip, but this tutorial is basically essential to get your head around how to play properly.
› Don't think of the M203 as your go-to weapon. In fact, it's really your last resort weapon, to be used only when you can't find another way to take out an enemy that's dug in behind cover.
› Cover comes in several varieties - ranging from complete to piss-weak. Send your men to hide behind a flimsy wooden crate and it won't spare them from death for long.
› Of course, the same goes for your enemies, so if you see a cowardly target behind something soft, you can just wear them down.
› Take it slow. Making sure you look around carefully and think about which angles your troops will be exposed to. You ain't Rambo.
› If there is a situation where you think your men will be exposed as they move, ensure they face they'll face the right way as they move, so they'll be looking at the danger zone.

README

Developer Pandemic
Publisher THQ **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32 MB 3D carcd

CONTROLS **A** Auto Rifleman ■ **S** Grenadier ■ **W** Team Leader ■ **D** Rifleman ■ **Space** Take cover ■ **E** GPS

DVD

TRIBES: VENGEANCE

DEMO CHALLENGE
Rise to the top of the in-game leader board while playing on Hard difficulty.

WHAT IS IT?

A ludicrously fast-paced online shooter with added jet-packs. You fly through the sky, letting rip with chainguns and bubble-blue explosive disks from 800-feet above. Launch yourself over hills and down valleys in a high-velocity arena deathmatch.

DEMO GOALS

This is *Gladiator*, *Tribes*-style. The dusty arena will be filled by bizarre, penguin-like carnivores in ever increasing numbers. Kill as many as possible to curry favour with your masters.

That's a suit of armour inspired by *Kill Bill*!

PERFORMANCE TIPS

› Fire your jet-pack in short, controlled bursts. Use it to adjust your velocity, and not simply to rise above the opposition. If you're shooting past an opponent, you can turn on your heel, fire against the ground, and bring yourself to a quick halt. Practise your skills.
› To achieve supersonic speeds, master the art of skiing. As you reach the ground hold down the space bar to convert your downward speed into forward momentum, skimming across the surface. Use valleys to accelerate, and hills as ramps.
› Bigger, better guns will occasionally fall into the arena. The most useful is the spinsor disc launcher – it inflicts a mean amount of damage, and knocks your enemies sideways. If you're surrounded, point it at your feet, fire, and jet-pack away. Enemies will scatter.

README

Developer Irrational Software
Publisher Vivendi Universal **Requires** 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, GeForce or Radeon

CONTROLS **W,A,S,D** movement ■ **Left Mouse** fire ■ **Right mouse** fire jetpack ■ **Mouse Wheel** change weapon ■ **E** grenade ■ **F** use ■ **X** coms ■ **C** command map ■ **Control** zoom

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NEXT MONTH'S PC GAMES ADDICT ON SALE DEC 8

"LET'S TRY THAT ONE MORIA TIME"

LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH REVIEWED

All magazine contents and gifts subject to change. Some gifts not available overseas.

REVIEWS
Everquest 2
Need for Speed Underground 2
Pro Evolution Soccer 4

PREVIEWS
Darwinia
GTA: San Andreas
Brothers in Arms
Dungeon Siege 2

DEMOS
LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth
Pirates!
SW: Battlefront

EXTRA-LIFE
Half-Life TV
Warcraft 3 Mods
Max Payne vs. Worms

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
Still the ultimate soccer-sim? Hmm?

MEN OF VALOR
We'll spell it wrong next month too...

FOR MORE INFO GO TO
WWW.ATARI.COM.AU
Download a FREE playable demo

THE COMPLETE WWII EXPERIENCE

PC CD

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AXIS & ALLIES

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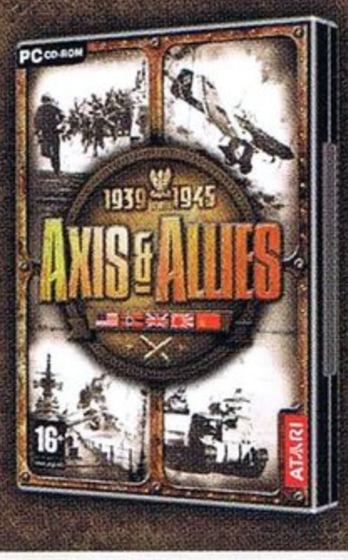

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TIMEGATE STUDIOS

ATARI

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They've had over two years and still haven't matched Antec's TruePower, the best-selling and most awarded power supply line ever. And now we're shipping our all new Neo480—the ultimate power supply for gamers and other high performance users—and Phantom350, the unique fanless power supply that is totally silent. All backed by our peerless AQ3 three year warranty. For complete information you can go to www.antec.com. But please, don't tell them. It would be cruel.

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